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THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS AT THE END OF THE
TRAIL



VERA'S MOVEMENT HAD BEEN TOO QUICK

THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS ON THE EDGE OF THE DESERT

BY
MARGARET VANDERCOOK

Author of "The Ranch Girls" Series,
"The Red Cross Girls" Series, etc.

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STORIES ABOUT CAMP FIRE GIRLS

Eight Volumes

- THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS AT SUNRISE HILL
THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS AMID THE SNOWS
THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD
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The Camp Fire Girls on the Edge of the Desert

CHAPTER I

FLOWER OF GOLD

THE last flames of the camp fire were slowly dying. But, as the sun was sinking, the little space in the woods surrounding the fire was lit with the color of flame.

A girl sat there alone in her ceremonial camp fire dress. A band of bright gold braid bound her head. One could learn from the insignia on her costume that she was already a torch bearer. Above the orange and red of the flame was the touch of white in her emblem, portraying the ascending smoke. She was like a guardian spirit of the fire.

Perhaps she may have been dreaming or merely repeating something aloud to herself. For, seated on the ground, the girl was

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leaning forward with her chin resting in her hand, and, although her eyes were closed, a book lay open in her lap. Between the leaves of the book was a sheet of paper upon which some lines were written in lead pencil. Here and there a word was marked out and another inserted in its place.

Finally the camp fire girl, unclosing her eyes, picked up this paper and, after first glancing around to be sure that the trees and grass about her had no ears read aloud in a low voice:

In the moon of the peach blossoms,
Towards the land of the setting sun,
Ghosts of old camp fires keep calling;
Camp fires whose race has been run.

I can see the sands of the desert;
I can hear strange desert cries;
And ever my thoughts go homing
To a tent under desert skies.

"Bettina," a voice called.

And, like a flash, the girl in the camp fire dress, leaning over, dropped the paper with her poem upon it into the fire."

"Polly, I am here under our pine trees," she called back.

Then, getting up, she stood with her back to the sun. She had yellow-brown hair which looked gold in this light, a slender figure and delicate features, and must have been about sixteen.

The girl who joined her was a complete contrast. Since they were in the woods together, one might have been thought a gypsy and the other, except for her dress, some Norse maiden who had stepped forth from Scandinavian mythology.

The younger girl was small and had dark hair falling to her shoulders. Her eyes were black and her color brilliant. She was wearing a short skirt, a red sweater and a black velvet tam o'shanter, while over her arm she carried a long gray cloak.

"How could you come out here alone, Bettina?" she demanded reproachfully, marching forward as soon as she appeared upon the scene and throwing the coat about the other girl's shoulders.

"As soon as our Camp Fire girls had disappeared mother asked me what had become of you, and I have been looking for you ever since. It must have been an hour ago? What makes you such a goose?"

She spoke straightforwardly but without ill nature, so the older girl only laughed and shook her head.

"I am accustomed to being called a dreamer, Polly, cousin of mine, and a good many other things by my family, but not a goose. Still, I expect you are right."

She put her arm across her cousin's shoulder.

"When the girls were getting ready to go I slipped out here to the woods by myself. I was tired and wanted to be alone for a little while, but I should have told some one. Has Aunt Mollie worried about me? I built a fire, so I was not cold."

Polly glanced back at the dying flames, as the two girls started for home.

"Your fire does not appear very warming," she answered bluntly. "And mother was worrying. As you came to us, Bettina, because you were not well, naturally we feel responsible. But I suppose you were reading or writing, or else in the clouds. Funny why people in the clouds always wish to inhabit them alone. There ought to be room in the clouds for companions as well as in other places."

The two girls were walking now arm in arm through a small pine woods in New Hampshire, just as another Polly and Betty had walked a good many years before. But these two girls—although their names were alike, and although they too were members of a Sunrise Hill Camp Fire Club—were utterly unlike the former ones in temperament and experience.

Bettina was the daughter of Betty Ashton and Anthony Graham. After her father had served his state as Governor for two terms, he had been sent as United States senator to Washington, where the family had since been living, coming back home to New Hampshire only for occasional summer vacations.

Yet now it was April and Bettina was on her way to the old Webster farmhouse which stood, as it always had, not far from the first Sunrise Hill Camp.

In reality she and Polly Webster were not cousins, since Polly was Mollie O'Neill's oldest child and named for her famous aunt; but the friendship between the mothers and the families was so great that it had passed into an intimacy closer in this world

many times than the intimacies of relationship. For since Polly O'Neill, who was now Mrs. Richard Burton, traveled a great part of the year, because of her own and her husband's profession, and because of her fondness for Europe, Mollie and Betty, now Mrs. Webster and Mrs. Graham, had grown to depend more on each other than in their girlhood days. So, when the spring came, and Bettina was not well in Washington, she had been sent at once to Mollie Webster's home and Mollie's care.

The girls walked quickly, as it was nearly dusk; Polly with the ease and swiftness of a girl who had been brought up in the country, and Bettina nearly as easily, yet with a different kind of grace. For there are persons who seem to be able to move with almost no effort, and their shy fleetness is characteristic of certain temperaments. In almost all cases you will find it among persons who have deep emotions but strange reserves.

Bettina Graham talked very little and perhaps this alone made her unusual among girls.

After a few further moments of silence on her part, Polly glanced up at her.

“It is curious, Bettina, that no one of your names suits you. You were called Bettina and ‘Little Princess’ when you were a tiny girl and now you are taller than your mother or any of us. ‘Tall Princess’ would be a better title at present. Even your Camp Fire name is too difficult to say—‘Anacaona,’ Flower of Gold—though I suppose the meaning is charming. But I am too matter-of-fact a person to like anything so fanciful.”

An elusive sense of humor may sometimes hide behind reserve, which served Bettina now and then not to take Polly too seriously.

“I am afraid nothing altogether suits about me,” she returned, smiling, however, and not speaking as if she were sorry for herself. “At least, I fear that is what my mother sometimes thinks, although she is good enough to try to conceal the fact. I am a disappointment to her. Here I am nearly sixteen and supposed to come out in society in another two or three years—and with a mother who is almost the most

popular woman in Washington. Yet I hate even to appear at one of our own small tea parties. I never can think of a single thing to say to strangers. The truth is, Polly, one of the reasons I was not well this spring was because mother wished me to help her entertain more and I dreaded it. It is such peace to be here in these quiet woods."

Then both girls paused for a moment.

The woods were no longer still.

Some one was walking toward them—a young fellow who kept striking at the trees and shrubs with a small stick he held in his hand. He was singing in a charming tenor voice, but stopped, took off his hat and bowed almost too gracefully to the two girls.

"Hello!" Polly said, indifferent but friendly enough.

Bettina scarcely moved her head. She flushed a little though as the young man passed, but did not speak until he was out of sight.

"I wish I might have had my visit without any other guest. I don't like Ralph Marshall." And then, "but please do tell

me at once, Polly. I have been realizing ever since you joined me that you had more news. All day I have been feeling it in the atmosphere. You have had another letter."

Nodding, Polly slipped her hand into her pocket.

"You do know about things, Bettina, before they happen. It is what everybody says about you, but please don't guess about my future, I prefer not knowing till the time comes."

She took out the letter and her eyes were brilliant.

Yes, Tante has written again; the letter is addressed to me, but is for both of us. She says we are to talk over her plan to our families at once and that of course they will disapprove as they always have disapproved of everything she has ever suggested or done. But, just the same, we are to make them agree finally. She says *we must*—even if she has to come home and then go from here to Washington to argue the question."

"It is too like what one has dreamed of to come true," Bettina began, and then

stopped because Polly had taken her by both shoulders and was shaking her.

"The things that Tante plans always come true, no matter how everybody else opposes them. That is one of the blessed facts about her. Ever since I can remember she had been more than a fairy godmother to us." And Polly's face showed that there was one person in the world about whom she was not matter-of-fact. Indeed, no one understood—not even Polly herself how much hero worship she felt for her mother's famous sister.

But they were nearly at home. Lights were shining through the windows of the living room at the big farm, and on the veranda two persons were waiting.

"Let us not speak of the plan until after tea," Polly whispered, as her father and mother walked forward to meet them.

Polly slipped her hand in her father's and they went swinging along hand in hand back to the house.

Mrs. Webster walked more slowly with Bettina keeping beside her. She was still unchanged from our Mollie O'Neill, except that there were a few gray hairs which had

come when her children were ill. She was plump, of course, but then soon after her marriage Mollie had settled down to the serenities of life, and they had kept her eyes as blue and her skin as soft and rose-colored as ever.

She enjoyed being solicitous about some one's health and at present was much concerned about Bettina's. But she was more concerned later because, when supper time arrived, one of her sons had not come in. And this was Billy Webster, who was not in the least like his father—the Billy Webster of other days. This Billy was always in the habit of doing all the things he should not, and Dan, all the things he should. And Mollie might have remembered that this difference in her twin sons was not unlike her own and her sister's behavior in other days. But they had had no father to guide them and her husband was strict with his sons.

Ralph Marshall—the other visitor at the farm whom the girls had passed in the woods—was having dinner with other friends, and for this Bettina at least was grateful.

Yet the meal was not so agreeable as usual. Bettina and Polly were too silent and too absorbed, Mrs. Webster was plainly nervous and Dan, who was like her in almost every way, shared her emotion.

"It would not be a propitious evening for persuading her father to see things as she wished him to," Polly thought. But Billy was always the family difficulty.

Half an hour later he had not yet appeared in the library. Neither had Polly or Bettina broached the subject on both their minds, although Polly sat on the arm of her father's chair reading the same book with him.

Better than any one, she understood her father. He would not show anxiety; but until Billy came in he would not be able to give his attention to anything else, and his reading was only a pretense.

Then, just a few moments after half-past eight, there was an unexpected noise along the drive leading up to the front door.

Polly reached the window first. She could see the lights of an approaching automobile which, a moment later, stopped at the foot of their steps.

To her amazement her small brother, who had been at home but a few hours before, stepped out of the car with a suitcase in his hand. The next instant some one following ran in ahead of Billy.

Polly reached the front door in time to open it for their visitor; but, by this time the family was in the hall, and the figure swept by Polly to throw her arms about her mother's neck.

"Mollie O'Neill, are you glad to see me? I have just traveled hundreds of miles until I am nearly dead. Yes, I know I ought to have telegraphed, but I've something I want to talk to you about and I did not want you to know I was coming. You might have tried to stop me, Richard did try."

Then she stopped embracing Mrs. Webster and kissed Polly and Bettina and Dan and Mr. Webster—all as gaily and quickly as possible.

Of course it was Polly O'Neill—Mrs. Richard Burton—for no one else had such a fashion of turning up at unexpected moments.

"But, Tante, we have not even mentioned

your scheme—your letter only arrived today,” Polly Webster said aloud.

Mrs. Webster shook her head and laughed at the same time.

“Of course you want to do something impossible, Polly O’Neill Burton, but I am glad to see you for any reason. It has been two years since you were here. Where did you find my Billy?”

A boy of about fourteen, small for his age and with fair hair and blue eyes, had by this time slipped quietly in and put down the suitcase. He had spoken to no one.

“Where did I find Billy?” Polly was moving toward the big living room. “I found him because he and I are birds of a feather, which means we know where to look for each other.”

CHAPTER II

DREAM PLACES

“IT isn’t so impracticable as you think, Mr. William Webster,” said Polly O’Neill Burton from the depth of a big camp chair.

It was a warm April afternoon and tea was being served out under the elms not far from the Webster house. Mollie Webster sat before a big wicker table covered with the Webster tea service and china over a hundred years old.

Dan Webster, who was a big, dark-haired fellow with blue eyes and his mother’s sweet nature, was carrying about teacups. He was followed by Ralph Marshall, who was spending a spring vacation from college at the Webster farm, and was now making himself useful by serving the hot muffins and cakes.

Billy Webster sat apart from the others reading, while Bettina and Polly were on either side of Mrs. Burton’s camp chair;

and Mr. Webster stood upright, smiling down on its occupant.

"When was there anything that Polly O'Neill wanted from her girlhood up that wasn't practical according to her view?" he demanded.

The Polly in the camp chair reached up and took hold of his hand.

"Do sit down, William, I suppose I must call you by that bugbear of a name, since we have another Billy and are getting so hopelessly old. We shall have to find another name for Polly as well, now that we are going to be together for a long time." And having persuaded her brother-in-law to sit down beside her, the older Polly pulled one of the younger's curls, "Why not Peggy, 'Peg o' My Heart,' after the charming play? But see here, William, I have persuaded my husband to come around to my way of thinking, and he is not an easy person to manage.

"Although she won't confess it, Mollie is half persuaded; and when I can lead you to the light, then I must see Betty and Anthony. But, seriously, why not? It will be a wonderful experience for the girls

and one we shall never forget in this life and perhaps in another. I have to spend a year outdoors. For that length of time I am not to be allowed to act for a single night. Richard must, of course, go on with his engagements. Now I never am able to see my family or my friends when I am working and I regret it a great deal more than any of you realize.

“Instead of being sent off somewhere with my maid to a horrid hotel, where I shall probably die of the blues and the lonesomes, as I did once years ago before Bobbin and Richard rescued me, why won’t all of you or some of you come and camp in the desert with me?”

Polly’s cheeks were glowing with two bright spots of color and her eyes darkening as they always did in moments of excitement or pleading. She had forgotten the sofa pillows back of her, upon which she was supposed to recline, like an invalid, and had raised herself upright in her chair with one foot twisted up under her.

Mrs. Richard Burton was still as slender as Polly O’Neill had been, but, unlike Mollie, her black hair had no gray in it.

Her years of work and success had kept her extraordinarily young; but then she had that vivid quality which keeps people from ever growing old. She was not beautiful and never had been, even as a girl; yet her face was extraordinarily fascinating and her voice had an almost magic quality in it, which had come from her long years of training as an actress.

Everybody watched her now, as they always did whenever she talked.

"I'll come with pleasure, Mrs. Burton," Ralph Marshall answered, walking over toward her chair with his offerings from the tea table.

Looking at him in a friendly but half critical fashion, she shook her head. Her sister had explained that Ralph was a college student and the son of one of the richest men in the state, who was also a friend of her husband's and of Senator Graham's.

"Sorry, but this is a Camp Fire girls' expedition and no male persons are allowed except relatives," Mrs. Burton returned good-naturedly.

Then, moving her head in order to speak

to her sister, she observed Ralph drop a small piece of paper into Bettina's lap. Also she saw Bettina flush as her hand closed quickly over it.

"You know, Mollie, years ago when we started our Sunrise Camp Fire club we began to wish then that we might live outdoors some day in a climate where it would be possible the whole year through. Well, it has taken half a lifetime to accomplish, but the idea is practical now. And even if we have become somewhat elderly Camp Fire girls, your Polly and Bettina's Betty are not. Then I want to ask some other girls—Dick and Esther's two daughters—enough to form another Sunrise Hill club."

"But it is the most extravagant project I ever heard of in my life, Polly," Mrs. Webster remonstrated. "I suppose you haven't the shadow of an idea what it may cost to have a dozen young persons living with you in a tent in Arizona, or half a dozen tents. It all sounds too hot and terrifying to me for anything. Please do forget all about it, my dear, or we shall all be so uncomfortable," she ended plaintively,

as if there were no escape had her twin sister made up her mind.

The others laughed.

"But you are not to come with us, Mollie, if you don't like the idea, and perhaps you would be frightened. Once years ago, I spent a night alone near the desert and I have never forgotten the wonder of it. But you will let me have Polly with me for the summer at least, and perhaps the boys. The children have never been away from New England and it will be a part of their education to see this western country of ours."

At a short distance from the family group Billy Webster had suddenly ceased reading. He was white and delicate looking for a country boy.

"Under no circumstances can the boys go with you, Polly," Mr. Webster said positively.

And Polly Webster, although appreciating her own selfishness, gave a sigh of relief. This speech of her father's gratified the desire of her own heart, since it meant that she was to be allowed to go.

But the older Polly seemed not to have heard.

"Yes, I do know in a way what it will cost," she argued. "At least, Richard says I can perfectly afford it and he looks after the money we both earn. Besides, Mollie dear, as I have no children of my own, I don't see why I can't do for yours and a few others now and then."

And Mollie, at the moment, said nothing more, for Polly's one baby had died a few years before.

"I have written to Esther in Boston that I want her two daughters, and I am going to Washington to see Betty as soon as I am strong enough."

Then she turned to Bettina. Since the beginning of their conversation Bettina had not spoken. Polly scarcely remembered her making a dozen speeches since her arrival, unless they were answers to questions. As she had been talking all her life whenever there was the least opportunity, Polly Burton feared that she was not going to be able to understand Bettina. Then Betty had written such odd letters about her only daughter, as if she herself did not altogether understand her.

But Betty's letters had placed Bettina

on a kind of pedestal, suggesting that she lived in a finer, purer atmosphere than other girls. Mrs. Burton was not so sure. At this moment she did not like the fashion in which Bettina had received a mysterious note from Ralph Marshall. It looked secretive. And Bettina was still flushed and embarrassed.

Polly felt a sudden qualm. After all, she knew little about girls, and if anything happened to Betty's or Mollie's daughter while under her care, would she not always feel responsible?

Bettina at this instant suddenly jumped up, her face growing warm and lovely as she started running across the grass lawn like a graceful child.

The next moment, forgetting her years and everything else, Mrs. Burton fled after her.

For they had both discovered almost simultaneously that a carriage was entering the gate which divided the Webster farm from the grounds about the house. And out of the carriage a handkerchief was being riotously waved.

At their approach the carriage stopped and a woman alighted.

She put her hands on Bettina's shoulders kissing her on both cheeks.

"You are looking better, darling."

Then she turned.

"Polly O'Neill, didn't you know I would come from Washington as soon as I learned you were in this part of the world? How can you look so exactly like you always did as a girl, in spite of your age and honors? You are thin as a rail."

It was Betty Ashton—Mrs. Anthony Graham—exquisitely dressed and perhaps more beautiful than ever. She was now recognized as one of the loveliest women in Washington; indeed in the United States.

Yet she and the really great actress came gaily walking across the lawn, with their arms about each other like school girls.

"Don't tell me you think I have gained a pound, Polly O'Neill Burton, or I shall never forgive you, though of course I know I have gained twenty. How did I find out you were here? Why, Bettina telegraphed me. Isn't she lovely. She said you had some wonderful scheme on hand. Whoever saw Polly without a problem. Have your own way, dear, as far as I am con-

cerned. It isn't such a bad way as it sometimes seems. But I do wish you looked stronger."

Then Mollie joined her sister and friend.

CHAPTER III

THE HUMAN EQUATION

IN an unscientific fashion Mrs. Burton was searching for her purse. She had peered in the bureau drawers, in her dismantled trunk, and was now sitting on the edge of her bed trying mentally to discover the lost object.

Since her arrival at her sister's home when had she last seen her pocketbook and for what purpose had she used it?

Ordinarily Mrs. Burton traveled with a maid, who attended to as many details of life for her as were possible, in order that she might save her strength for her work. Also because Polly Burton was not much more dependable about small matters than Polly O'Neill had been. But at present Marie was away on a holiday, trying to reconcile herself to the prospect of a year of life in the wilderness, instead of in hotels, or in Mr. and Mrs. Burton's New York city apartment, where they lived when they were acting in New York.

As Polly with her usual impetuosity had decided to follow her letter to her niece a few hours after the letter was written, there had been no opportunity to find another maid. Not that one was in the least useful or desirable in Mollie's house. Mrs. Burton was not spoiled into the idea of thinking that she required the services of a maid except when she was at work.

However, at present she was still in her dressing gown and with her bed unmade. Mollie always insisted that her sister have her breakfast in bed during the first of her visit and until she was entirely rested. It was now nine o'clock. The early search for the pocketbook was really due to this fact. At any moment the other Polly, whom the family were now struggling to learn to call Peggy, might appear to offer her aid and to help make the bed.

This morning visit represented the one opportunity when she and her adored Tante might have a talk without being interrupted.

And this was why Mrs. Burton had been searching for her money. For here was her chance for bestowing a gift upon her namesake, and through her upon Dan and

Billy, without family discussion or objection. Always she looked forward to this moment as one of the chief pleasures of her visit to her sister.

Not that Mollie and her husband were poor. They were unusually prosperous, owning one of the best farms in New England. But they did not have money for unnecessary things. Indeed, no matter what they might have had, they would never have permitted it to be used extravagantly. Therefore Peggy — and her adopted name will be used henceforth, since no one, not even the public, could call her distinguished aunt by any name save Polly Burton — and her brothers rarely had much money of their own to spend. Tante, however, was a delightfully extravagant person, who never had forgotten how poor she used to be herself, and how many impossible things she had then wished for.

Therefore, a few moments later, when Peggy knocked at her door, an abstracted voice bade her enter. For the purse had not even been mentally found. Yet, as far as she could recall, Polly thought she

had put it in her top bureau drawer. There at present, however, it was not.

She lifted her eyes as her niece came in.

“‘Peggy of my Heart,’ look in the bureau drawer and find my pocketbook,” she began nonchalantly, knowing that it was a wise method to pursue in persuading another person to find a lost treasure. Better to begin by not confusing the searcher with the sense of loss.

So Peggy looked for five minutes and, being a matter-of-fact person, she looked thoroughly.

“It isn’t here,” she announced, with the conviction characteristic of her.

Her aunt waved a vague hand.

“Be sure to look everywhere, dear.”

And Peggy conscientiously looked, Mrs. Polly Burton assisting with less energy.

But by and by, when both of them were exhausted from the most fatiguing occupation in the world—searching for and not finding a desired object—they sat down on opposite sides of the bed, facing each other.

“How much money did you have in your purse, Tante?” Peggy demanded,

speaking with the severity each member of her family and her intimate friends employed in discussing practical matters with the famous but sometimes erratic lady.

“A hundred dollars,” Polly returned with emphasis. “Only yesterday afternoon when we came in from tea I counted the money carefully and then thought I put the purse in the top drawer. Afterwards I was out of my room until about ten o’clock last night and then your mother and Aunt Betty and I came up here and talked.

Peggy frowned.

It amused her aunt to watch her. Peggy had so much the look of her father—the boy with whom Polly O’Neill had used to have so many quarrels—in spite of the difference in their coloring. If Peggy was as obstinate as he had been, it was to be hoped that aunt and niece would have few differences of opinion.

But Peggy’s attention at present was concentrated on the lost money.

“Mother will be terribly distressed when she hears, for it must have been one of the

servants. And we have had all of them a long time."

"Oh, for goodness sake, it does not matter so much as all that." Polly spoke like an embarrassed girl. "And in any case please don't tell mother."

"She will not only be worried but vexed with me as well. Somehow I must have been careless, and there is nothing worse, I think, than holding other people responsible for one's carelessness. The money will turn up or else I'll write Uncle Richard."

But Peggy was not so easily diverted from an idea or a purpose.

There was a characteristic line from her forehead to the end of her short, straight nose. Also she had a fashion of lifting her head and looking fearlessly ahead, as if she were contemplating something in the outside world, when in reality she was only thinking.

"Billy might help us," she said suddenly. "He knows all the servants on the place and they like him better than they do the rest of us."

And, without waiting for her aunt's consent, Peggy disappeared.

She was gone a long time—so long that Mrs. Burton grew annoyed. She made her own bed and made it extremely well, having never forgotten this part of her Camp Fire education. She also wrote a note to her husband, who was on a tour in the West. She was just contemplating dressing and joining the others downstairs when Peggy came back. Billy was with her, and Billy bore the lost pocketbook.

His expression was odd, but it was Peggy about whom Polly felt suddenly frightened. Her usually brilliant color was gone, and her lips were in a hard line.

“Billy took your purse,” and then in a queer voice, “but please make him explain I cannot.”

Billy laid the purse gently on his aunt’s knee and looked directly at her.

It chanced that Polly was sitting in a tall chair so that her eyes were on a level with the boy’s.

It had always been Polly’s impression that Billy was her favorite of her sister’s children; perhaps because he was not the favorite with his mother or father. And then undeniably he was a problem.

"I took your pocketbook, Tante."

He spoke with a little embarrassment—not a great deal. "I needed some money at once and knew you would give it to me later. There was no chance to ask. You were downstairs and when I came up afterwards to tell you mother and Aunt Betty were in here and I did not wish them to know."

There was a slight exclamation of consternation and shame from Peggy, but Mrs. Burton was speechless.

She was not a moralist—that is, it was difficult for her to know how to preach. But would preaching or anything she could say make Billy understand the wrong he had done? His mother and father were the most punctilious people in the world? What must they not have said to him in times past? He was not a child.

"I am sorry, Billy; it wasn't square," Polly said finally, but looking and feeling more ashamed than the boy himself apparently did.

Billy's blue eyes were puzzled and regretful, but not conscience-smitten.

"You intended to persuade father to

take me west with you and I would rather have gone than anything in the world," he remarked slowly in reply. "Now you don't want me to go because you are afraid of the responsibility I would be, and you don't trust me."

He did not put this as a question. He was making a statement. Nevertheless his aunt answered, "Yes."

Then, without any further explanation and without even asking to be forgiven, Billy walked out of the room.

"He is the queerest boy in the world," Peggy said in distressed tones when the door closed; "and worries mother and father nearly to death. No one of us understands him. He does whatever he likes and then accepts his punishment without a word. He does not like the farm as Dan and I do, and has never been a hundred miles away. Yet he would rather do a horrid thing like this and so spoil his chance for going west with you. Father might have given in."

Polly arose. "Let's not talk about it. Run downstairs, dear; I am going to put on my riding habit. Will you see if the

horses will be ready at eleven? Aunt Betty and I are going to ride over the country together. I can't walk very far and it is our best chance for discovering our old haunts. I knew every inch of this country once as a girl and want to see our old Sunrise Hill cabin again. Don't speak of what has happened."

Then as Peggy started to leave, her aunt thrust the delayed gifts for herself and Dan into her hand. They were two ten-dollar bills.

Afterwards when Peggy had gone, she nervously counted over her money; Billy had taken only ten dollars—her usual gift to him. For even this she was thankful. But for what purpose had the boy needed money in such a hurry? And why had she discovered him on the night of her arrival waiting alone at the side of the road when he should have been at home with his family?

Well, perhaps it was best to have found out Billy's peculiarities before taking him away with her. Nevertheless, Mrs. Burton was profoundly sorry. Certainly the boy needed help of some kind. Yet she would

probably not be equal to the problem of suddenly adopting a large and nearly grown-up family of girls.

"Fools rush in," Polly smiled and then sighed. "But, after all, I won't have an opportunity for worrying over my own health very often."

Then she went down to the living room.

CHAPTER IV

THE APRIL WOODS

“Again the blackbirds sing; the streams
Wake, laughing, from their winter dreams,
And tremble in the April showers
The tassels of the maple flowers.”

POLLY recited Whittier's verse with a wistful inflection in her voice that made her companion turn from looking at the scenery to gaze at her.

“Don't make a cheerful poem sound like a lament for all the lost springs in the world, Polly darlint,” Betty Graham pleaded. “I declare you become more of a fascinator the older you grow. But I suppose that is a part of your genius. Funny we didn't know you were a genius in the old Sunrise Hill Camp Fire days, and only thought you were ‘fee’ as the Irish say. Queer there is another Camp Fire organization of girls now, with our old title and with Mollie Webster for their guardian! Ah well, times do change, though I know that is not an original remark.”

Polly laughed. The two friends were cantering along side by side through a lane in the New Hampshire woods. They were on their way to see the old cabin where long ago they had lived and worked together with nearly a dozen other girls for a happy year.

The riding was difficult because the road was still muddy from spring rains, but Polly rode frequently in Central Park when she happened to be in New York City and Betty, in an effort to keep her figure, had daily horseback exercise in Washington. At present they were actually paying more attention to each other's conversation than to their horses.

"And here I am adopting some of Mollie's Camp Fire responsibilities without being half so well equal to them as she is. Do you think my scheme of taking a few of her Camp Fire girls and some of my own to camp on the edge of the Painted Desert with me a mad scheme, Betty? Of course, I have to see the girls first and choose the ones I wish and then argue the matter with their parents. You and Anthony are going to allow me to have Bettina?"

Involuntarily both women had slowed down their horses.

"We cannot help it very well, Polly," Mrs. Graham replied. "Bettina has thought of nothing else and dreamed of nothing else since you first wrote of your plan to her and to Polly—oh, to Peggy, I mean. I do hate this business of two persons in one family having the same name. We have had trouble enough with the difficulty in our own family. Bettina has even written some charming verses about the desert, which she showed to me the night of my arrival.

"But I am afraid I shall never have any more influence over my daughter after she has been with you, dear. Truth is, Bettina and I adore each other but are not in the least alike. And Anthony says I must give Bettina the chance to do the thing she believes she would love. She does not care in the least for society or many people, and it is so hard for me to understand," Betty Graham ended wistfully.

But in return her beloved friend only laughed. "Nonsense, Betty; we are not all born beauties and belles, as you were.

Oh, yes, I do think your Bettina is very pretty, so don't get your mother bird feathers ruffled. But I don't think 'the little Princess' is the beauty her mother was and is." Then seriously, "Of course I shall do my best to look after your daughter, Betty dear, if anything should—" she hesitated.

Her friend answered gravely, "Of course her father and I will both understand. But Bettina knows nothing of the actual world. She has lived in her ambitions and dreams. Hard as it is for us, she must take her own risks and learn her own lessons."

"If only you would come with me, Betty—you or Mollie. I may not be equal to the task alone," Polly suddenly announced, having felt another qualm at the task ahead of her. Then she laughed.

"I have just had the funniest letter from Sylvia Wharton. You see, I wrote and asked Sylvia to take a year from her hospital work and come west to look after me. Doctor Sylvia flatly declines and suggests that she has more important things to do. Still, she has done a Sylviaesque thing! She proposes, or rather orders me, to take with

me a young woman who started her hospital training and has broken down. She has recovered, but Sylvia thinks the change will help her. Also, she says the young woman is particularly well adapted for looking after all of us.

"She writes that I won't need a maid and am to leave poor Marie in New York. She is right, I expect, about Marie, but I won't do that. However, I don't think it will be a bad idea, if the young woman Sylvia wishes me to take is fairly agreeable. She can teach my Camp Fire girls first-aid requirements and then, if any one is ill, help in an emergency."

Mrs. Betty Graham nodded her handsome head.

"Sylvia is always sensible and has been from her youth up, in contrast to you, dear. However, don't think that you and your girls are to be left in peace in your desert camp, Polly. I cannot go along with you at present, but I wouldn't miss the experience of being with you for a time for a year of every-day life. So I'll turn up some time when you least expect me—and I shall bring my Tony. You haven't invited my

son to your camp, Polly; are you taking Dan and Billy?"

For the second time Mrs. Burton's expression changed to one of anxiety. "I wish I knew whether to ask your advice about something, Betty."

But, before she had finished, her horse stumbled in a hole ahead and, becoming frightened, started to run.

First Polly felt herself being thrown violently forward, then tilted to one side, then backward and forward again. However, she had no idea of being frightened and, although her saddle girth was broken, she still held on. Really, the first thought flashing through her consciousness was the recollection of her sister Mollie's parting words:

"Do please remember, Polly, that you are not young as you used to be. I don't approve of this horseback riding for women of yours and Betty's age. And I always feel more nervous about your getting into trouble than I do my own children.

Then her own reply: "Nonsense, Mollie; you always were a 'fraid cat.' I expect to ride a bunking broncho for the next year,

so I certainly ought to be able to manage one of William's quiet steeds."

However, Polly Burton was becoming unable to manage one of "William's quiet steeds."

Although, by a firmer clutch on the reins, she had been able to keep herself in the saddle without its slipping off, yet her horse kept pounding ahead, paying not the least attention to her exhortations or her pulling.

A difficulty was that the horse was often used for driving and had a less sensitive mouth than those to which its rider had been accustomed.

However, the experience might be exhilarating if the saddle did not slip off entirely, as the road lay straight ahead. The horse would stop when he grew tired. There was only one trouble to be particularly feared and that was the loss of one's breath from a pain in the side which the hard awkward riding might bring on.

The other horse had straightway been outdistanced. After one cry from Betty, Polly heard no other sound from her.

But now the pain was coming which was

the trial of her life, and a sense of dizziness followed.

Fortunately a little ahead, on a path that ran alongside the road, a boy and a girl were walking. Polly believed she called to them, although they must have heard the noise of the runaway first.

For Billy Webster moved only a few steps and then stood waiting for the horse to come opposite him. When it did he made an upward leap. Seizing the bridle he continued holding on to it until the horse, after running a few yards more, peacefully stopped as if this had been his intention all along.

However, before this instant, looking down upon her nephew, it seemed to Mrs. Burton that he was very inadequate to the task ahead of him, although she never had seen any one so calmly determined.

When the horse ceased running Billy must also have lifted her down. The next thing she was conscious of was hearing him say:

"I don't think you need be frightened, Vera; she has not really fainted."

Then Mrs. Burton discovered that she



BILLY GAVE AN UPWARD LEAP

was seated on the ground with her back against a tree, and with her riding hat dangling rakishly over one eye. Above her a girl whom she had never seen before was anxiously bending.

Without making an effort to speak until the pain in her side grew less severe and her breathing more natural, Polly at once tried to straighten her hat.

But Billy continued to talk as if nothing unusual had occurred and as if his aunt could give him her undivided attention.

"I have been thinking the matter over, Tante, and I want to explain something to you," he said as he made a slight movement with his hand toward the girl. "This is Vera Lageloff, a friend of mine. I took your money before you had a chance to give it to me because Vera's people needed it and I knew it would be useless to ask father. I hope you will pardon me. I suppose it was not square. Vera's father is one of my father's farmers, who has been working a part of our land on shares. He has not been straight or industrious and father has asked him to go. Of course, he had to find some other place to go, but

he had no money and there are several other children. Vera told me that he had a chance, if he could only get the money for a railroad ticket, but had to have it at once. I had been to their house the night I met you. I did not tell them at home, because father does not like my interfering with his working people. And he does not trust Vera's father. I don't trust him, either, but I don't wish his children to suffer. Do you?"

Billy had at last concluded his speech.

While he was talking it occurred to his aunt, who was accustomed to having a good deal of attention paid to her health, and indeed to all her concerns, that her nephew was but little interested in her accident. But then he was never interested in anything which he considered unessential. Nevertheless, there was something about this youthful Billy Webster, which made him difficult to answer readily. If he was not going to become a socialist or an anarchist, at any rate he was a law unto himself.

Yet his aunt did not clearly understand what point he was trying to make at the present moment. In reply she murmured

something about being sorry; but this was not the time for such a discussion. In any case, his father must, of course, know best.

Then, struggling to get on her feet again and finding the girl beside her trying to help, Mrs. Burton for the first time acknowledged their introduction. She scarcely looked at the girl, because Billy again took up the conversation and was more amazing this time than before.

"I do hope you will take Vera to camp with you, Tante. She is a member of mother's Camp Fire club and mother likes her. Besides, she ought to get away from her family."

Billy's effrontery or his belief in his own judgment affected his aunt curiously. She had never known anything like it before. However, she had seen but little of Billy in the last few years, and before now he had appeared only as a shy, delicate boy.

Fortunately, before having to reply one way or the other to his latest demand, Mrs. Burton observed Betty Graham riding up the road toward her as rapidly as her horse could travel. Betty's concern over her friend's experience and its possible unfortu-

nate consequences was in striking contrast to the coldness and lack of interest of the younger generation.

Afterwards, returning home a little later on an entirely subdued animal, Mrs. Burton regretted that she had not looked at Billy's friend more carefully. At present she believed she would hardly recognize the girl if they chanced to meet again. And undoubtedly the Russian girl and her nephew must be devoted friends.

CHAPTER V

OBSERVATION

TWO girls were standing on the rear platform of a big observation car that had left Chicago a number of hours before.

They were charmingly dressed for travel—one in a brown corduroy coat and skirt, a cream-colored blouse and a soft brown felt hat, with a single cream-colored wing in it, and the other in blue. The first was a small, dark girl with a brilliant color, scarlet lips and black eyes. But little in the swiftly passing landscape seemed to escape her interest.

The other girl was perhaps a year older and had light golden-brown hair. Her eyes were sometimes gray, sometimes blue and now and then faintly green, should she chance to be standing under a group of trees or surrounded with any green foliage. Her dress was like that of her companion except for the difference in color. Her

expression was less animated; her vision appeared to be not only an outward but an inward one. She saw the landscape before her with pleasure and yet had even greater pleasure in the reflections it brought to her mind.

Finally, the train gave an unexpected lurch in making a wide curve, and she slipped her arm through her companion's.

"Isn't it heavenly, Peggy?" she demanded. And then. "I know I am selfish, so please don't reproach me; but sometimes I have wished that just you and I were going to camp with Tante. We have not been away very long, but we seem to be an odd combination."

The other girl laughed.

"Traveling with a group of girls Tante has chosen, did you expect anything else? The oddness of our party has probably only begun, Bettina. You know Tante has a curious fashion of liking or disliking an individual for what he or she happens to be, without any reference to their circumstances. And she has selected her Camp Fire club in this way. I suppose when you become as famous as she

is you can afford to do as you like," Peggy Webster concluded.

In spite of the difference in their natures the two girls were devoted friends.

Bettina now looked a little wistful.

"Tante does not like me much, does she, Peggy? Oh, I don't mean that she is not fond of me, because I am my mother's daughter and, for old associations, and she would do any kindness for me. But one knows when a person is attracted toward one without being told. Tante is much more interested in that queer Russian girl, Vera, and in the girl she brought with her from Chicago."

For a moment Peggy Webster continued to watch the landscape apparently sailing by. Then she answered.

"I think we had better go back to the others, Bettina, as it is nearly tea time. Yes, I agree with you that it does seem unfortunate that we girls start out by appearing to be so uncongenial. But perhaps our Camp Fire club life together will alter us. At least we will understand each other better after a few months of living together anyhow. Mother says that

is one of the most important influences of the Camp Fire. You know it is supposed to teach us to put aside the conventional society idea and learn to care for each other as men sometimes do. We are all girls and, whatever our circumstances, have pretty much the same needs and ideals."

Then feeling her cheeks crimson because she feared that her words held a suggestion of preaching, Peggy turned and started to lead the way back into the observation car. Bettina, however, did not at once follow her.

The rear half of the observation train was occupied by the new Sunrise Hill Camp Fire club. Mrs. Polly Burton, the new Camp Fire guardian, sat by one of the windows, glancing out at the great grain fields through which their train was cutting its way like a mammoth thrashing machine.

She was elegantly dressed in a tailored suit of dark blue cloth; and behind her hung a fur coat for use in case the weather should turn suddenly cold. Her bags and all her appurtenances of travel showed wealth and luxury, and yet, in spite of all

this and of her distinguished reputation, the great lady herself looked fragile and subdued. Indeed, she bore a striking resemblance to the very Polly O'Neill who so often used to start out on a task in a sudden burst of enthusiasm, only to find later that she had scarcely the ability or strength to go on.

Not alone did Bettina believe that the new club was an oddly assorted group!

Only in Chicago had they actually begun their journey to the West together.

Some time before, Mrs. Burton had left her sister's home in New Hampshire and in Chicago joined her husband, who was playing there during the late spring season. A few days before, Mr. and Mrs. Webster had come on from their home to Chicago in order to chaperon the new group of Camp Fire girls that far along the way. There they had been joined by Mrs. Burton and one other new club member besides Polly's French maid, Marie.

Marie had traveled with Polly everywhere since her marriage, having charge of her clothes—both her stage and personal ones—and striving, though vainly, to turn her

mistress into the fashionable, conventional character it was impossible for her ever to be.

At present Marie was hovering about, paying Polly small attentions which annoyed her, and which she felt were not good for the intimacy she hoped to establish with her Camp Fire girls.

Personally she wished to forget her usual style of life—the fatigue, the excitement, even her own success—and to have the girls forget it. But Marie was a constant and persistent reminder of all these things. Yet when she had suggested to Marie that she remain behind, as she would dislike a western camp, Marie had burst into such French tears and such French protestations that Mrs. Burton, who was never very firm where her affections were concerned, had given in.

Now Marie was really the most trying member of the ill-assorted party.

“Do please go back to your own place and leave me alone, Marie,” Mrs. Burton finally said, unable longer to conceal her irritation. “I am not a hopeless invalid and, even if I were, I should not wish you

to be constantly pushing cushions behind my back."

Then, as Marie flounced off in a temper, Mrs. Burton laughed and sighed.

Although accustomed to having thousands of eyes fixed upon her while she was acting, Polly had become embarrassed by the critical survey of two pair which were at present across from her. They belonged to her own Camp Fire group—Esther's and Dick Ashton's older daughter Alice, and Ellen Deal, the young woman Sylvia Wharton had more or less thrust upon the party.

Ellen was from a small town in Pennsylvania, but with her small, neat figure, high color and sandy hair, she might have come from a real English village in Yorkshire or Lancashire. She was older than the other girls and had already showed a decided fancy for Alice Ashton. Mrs. Burton fancied that she disapproved of her and would not try to conceal her point of view. She might really be too blunt to make for happiness in a Camp Fire club.

Alice Ashton was a typical Boston girl. She was like her mother in appearance,

except that her hair was a darker red, and she was handsomer than her mother had ever been. She wore glasses and was a graduate of Wellesley College. In accepting the Camp Fire invitation Alice had frankly stated that she wished to make an especial study of Arizona Indian customs for her English work the following year.

But she had not seen her mother's old friend since she was a little girl and, in Alice's case, Polly also felt she had proved a disappointment.

It was natural that Alice should expect a famous actress to be impressive in manner and appearance, and Polly Burton was neither—of which she was well aware. She was very slight and vivid and not always sure of herself or her moods. Really Alice gave her the feeling that she should resign at once as Camp Fire guardian and let Alice reign in her place. She would probably fill it far better.

But Sally Ashton was different, and Mrs. Burton felt that one might get amusement if not edification out of Sally. The very name of Sally was an encouragement to do or say something saucy. And this Sally

had large, soft brown eyes and wavy hair and little white, even teeth. If her expression was at present demure, one could see possibilities behind the demureness.

In order not to think of herself as under a critical survey, Mrs. Burton continued studying her new group of girls.

Sally was at the moment talking to the girl whom she had invited and who had joined the party with her at Chicago. If Gerry William's history was so unusual that it might be best not to confide her story to the Camp Fire girls until they knew each other better, at least Mrs. Burton was happy in the choice of her. She was so pretty and charming and seemed to have so many possibilities if only she could have the proper influences.

Gerry was about sixteen and slender, with lovely light hair, blue eyes, and with almost too much color in her cheeks. Fortunately she had once been a member of a Camp Fire club in Chicago and so knew of their methods and ideals.

There was no suggestion then that Gerry would be a problem in the new club.

Already she seemed to be making friends with most of the other girls.

Vera—Billy's adored friend—might be the trial. The girl had been born in Russia and brought to the United States about six or eight years ago. She spoke English perfectly and did not seem to be ill at ease, although she talked very little. However, Vera's heavy dark face, with her low brow and long dark eyes, was an interesting one. Curiously, she was also a friend of Mrs. Webster's—it was Mollie who had added her plea to Billy's that the Russian girl be a Camp Fire guest.

"Yet, after all, what understanding had she of girls? And how little she had seen of them since her own girlhood!" Mrs. Burton concluded.

Then, just as she was again becoming depressed, she saw her adored niece coming down the aisle.

Peggy always brought an atmosphere of relief and reasonableness. In fact, she discovered at once that her aunt was feeling frightened and unequal to the plan ahead. Of course, it was a great undertaking for a woman who had been spoiled

—as Polly O'Neill Burton had been—by husband, family, friends and an admiring public—and not in good health—to suddenly become guide, philosopher, mother and friend to a number of strange girls.

In spite of their audience, Peggy leaned over and kissed her.

“It will be all right, Tante; don't be downcast. Only at present everybody is homesick and tired as you are. Can't we have tea? You are not sorry we have come?”

“Certainly not,” and Polly smiled at her own childishness while she rejoiced over Peggy's sweetness and good sense.

Of course, she had known there would be difficulties in so original a Camp Fire club experiment. But when did anything worth while ever arrange itself without difficulties?

Ten minutes later two colored stewards in white uniforms had arranged the tables and brought in tea.

In entire good humor Mrs. Burton presided while the men were kept busy passing back and forth innumerable cups of tea and plates of sandwiches.

The girls were fifty per cent more cheer-

ful and consequently more agreeable. At the table nearest Mrs. Burton were Peggy, Sally Ashton and Gerry Williams.

All at once Mrs. Burton turned to her niece.

"What in the world has become of Bettina, dear?" she demanded. "I had not missed her until this moment. I am not a very successful old woman who lived in a shoe with so many children she couldn't tell what to do, for I don't even know when one of mine is lost."

Peggy got up.

"Bettina is out on the back platform dreaming, I suppose. I told her to come in with me a quarter of an hour ago. I'll go get her."

However, after a little time, Peggy returned alone looking a little cross.

"Bettina has disappeared. I can't find her," she announced. "As I did not want to miss tea, I asked our porter to look."

And no one thought of being worried about Bettina until the porter came to say that no young woman answering Bettina's description could be found.

CHAPTER VI

EXPERIENCE

BUT Bettina was not conscious of how long a time had passed, or that she was causing anxiety.

An unusual experience had come to her, and a most unconventional one.

Standing there at the back of the observation car, she had forgotten Peggy's suggestion that she return to the rest of the girls. But perhaps she would not have gone in any case, because Bettina was not enjoying their society. She was shy, or perhaps cold. It was difficult to tell which was the influence at work. Nevertheless, she was finding it as much of a trial to be friendly and at ease with her fellow-travelers as she had with her mother's older and more conventional guests in Washington. But it is possible that Bettina had inherited some of her father's reserve—the reserve which had made Anthony Graham work and study alone during those many hard years before reaching manhood.

However, to make up for her lack of interest and her uncongeniality with people—as is true with nearly all such persons—Bettina had an unusual fondness for nature.

Now, the landscape of Kansas had not appealed strongly to any one of the other girls. Usually the country was flat and covered with great fields of young corn or wheat, with prosperous farm-houses standing in the background. Yet Bettina saw color and grace in everything.

As the car rushed along, with its rattling and banging, she was trying to recall a line of Kipling's poetry which described the sound the wind made through the corn.

After Peggy left her, Bettina had caught hold of the wide railing at the end of the car for safety. She was now occupying the entire rear platform of the observation train alone. She was swaying slightly with the movement, with her eyes wide open and her lips slightly parted. Having taken off her hat, the afternoon sunshine made amber lights in her hair as it flickered amid the brown and gold.

Then, suddenly, Bettina became conscious that some one else had come out on

the same end of the car with her and was standing near.

It was stupid and self-conscious to flush as she always did in the presence of strangers.

"I hope I do not disturb you," she then heard a voice say courteously. And, turning her head to reply, Bettina beheld a young man of about twenty. He looked very dark—a Spaniard she believed him for the moment. His eyes were fine and clear, with a faraway look in them; his nose, aquiline; and he held his head back and his chin uplifted.

"You don't trouble me in the least," Bettina replied, feeling her shyness vanish. "Besides, I was just going back to my friends."

Yet she did not go at once.

She was interested in the unusual appearance of her companion. He had folded his arms and was looking gravely back at the constantly receding landscape.

"And east is east and west is west,
And never the twain shall meet."

He spoke apparently without regarding Bettina and softly under his breath.

Therefore it was Bettina who really began their conversation, their other speeches to each other having expressed only the ordinary conventionalities between fellow-travelers.

"It is curious—your repeating those lines," Bettina returned, her eyes changing from gray to blue, as they often did in moments of friendliness. "I have just been standing here trying to recall another line of Kipling's poetry. And it has come to me since you spoke: 'The wind whimpers through the fields.' Do you care for Kipling's poetry?"

The young man turned more directly toward Bettina.

"I am an Indian," he explained simply. "It is natural that I should think of those lines, for I have been for several years at a college in your eastern country and am now returning to my own people and my own land. I am a Hopi. My home is in the province of Tusayan, Arizona, in the town of Oraibi. We are Indians of the Pueblo."

"But you—" Bettina hesitated.

The young fellow threw back his head and, then realizing that custom demanded

it, lifted his hat. He was dressed as any other young college man might be, except that his clothes were simple and a little shabby.

"I am not entirely Indian," he continued, still so serious that Bettina was unconscious of there being anything out of the way in his confidence. "My mother was a Spanish woman, I have been told; but she died at my birth and now my father is again married and has children by a woman of his own race. Yet I am glad to return to my own people, to wear again the moccasin of brown deer-skin and the head-band of scarlet."

Instinctively the young man's pose changed. Bettina could see that his shoulders lifted and that he breathed more deeply. He stood there on the platform of the most civilized and civilizing monster in the world—a great express train—gazing out on the fields as if he had been an Indian chief at the door of his own tepee, surveying his own domains.

Naturally Bettina was fascinated. What young girl could have failed to have been interested? And Bettina had lived more in books and dreams than in realities.

"We are also going to Arizona," Bettina added quickly. "I have never been West before, though I have longed to always. We are to camp somewhere on a ranch not far from the Painted Desert. Do Indians live near there and would you mind telling me something of them? Are they still war-like? Sometimes I feel a little nervous, for we are to be only a party of girls and our Camp Fire guardian, except that we are to have a man and his wife for our cook and guide."

For an instant the young fellow laughed as any other boy would have done, and showing white, fine teeth. Afterwards he relapsed into the conventional Indian gravity.

"My own people are peaceful and always have been, except when we have been attacked by other Indians. Hopi means 'peaceful people,' and we have lived in Arizona, the land of 'few springs,' since before the days when your written history begins. The Apaches have always been our bitterest enemies. But they will not harm you—the great hand of your United States Government is over us all," he concluded.

And Bettina could not tell whether he spoke in admiration or in bitterness.

It was growing cooler and she shivered—not in reality from the cold half so much as from her interest in the conversation.

Nevertheless the Indian saw her slight movement.

“You are cold; you must be careful in the desert, as often the night turns suddenly cool after a scorching day. May I take you to your friends?”

Bettina was accustomed to having her own way. She was enjoying the talk with her unusual acquaintance far more than anything that had taken place since their journey began. Therefore it did not occur to her to consider that her absence might create uneasiness.

“Are you going to do anything else? If you are not I wonder if you would mind our finding a place somewhere and talking?” she suggested. “I know it is asking a great deal of you, but there are so many things I wish to know about the West.”

Bettina was like an eager child. But, then, ordinary conventionalities never

troubled her, unless they were forced upon her consideration.

And what could the young man do except assent.

He found Bettina a camp chair at the rear end of the adjoining car and himself a small one beside it.

But the chairs were not outside; they stood in an enclosed space just inside the train and beside a great window.

When her companion sat down beside her, one could not get a full view of Bettina.

However, Peggy did not pass her by, for she did not go into this car to search. But the colored porter did. Yet he had been told to discover a young woman who was alone, dressed in a blue suit and wearing a blue hat.

And Bettina was not alone. She was deeply engaged in conversation, and without a hat, so, although the porter did hesitate beside her, he did not interrupt, deciding that she was not the young woman he sought.

But here Mrs. Burton and two of the girls found her a few moments later.

As soon as the man returned and declar-

ing that Bettina had vanished, Polly had become instantly terrified. For a woman who was to be chaperon to half a dozen or more girls, she had far too much imagination. At once she conceived the idea that Bettina had fallen off the train—and—what could she say to the child's mother and father? It was too dreadful!

Indeed, Mrs. Burton would have had the train stopped immediately, except that Peggy and Ellen Deal, who at once rose to the occasion, insisted that Bettina be reconnoitered for again.

But when Bettina was finally traced and discovered in agreeable conversation with a strange young man, her chaperon was angry. Indeed, the natural Polly wished to assert herself and give the girl just such a scolding as she would have bestowed upon her mother in their younger days. Only, of course, the present, more elderly Polly was convinced that Betty would never have been so inconsiderate as her daughter.

However, remembering her own dignity as a newly-chosen Camp Fire guardian, after a few moments of reproach, she did manage to control her temper.

And Bettina, although making no defense, was sorry. She had not been intentionally selfish, only she did not see but one side of a situation until usually it was too late. She lived—as so many other people do—in her own visions and her own desires. Yet, at present, she deeply wished her mother's old friend to care for her and exaggerated the failure she was making with her. Without appreciating it, Polly walked in a kind of halo of achievement and charm before Bettina's eyes. Therefore, it was unfortunate Bettina did not realize that everything and everybody in the world Mrs. Polly Burton took more seriously than she did her own fame, and that the dearest desire of her heart at the present time was that her new Camp Fire girls should regard her as their friend.

CHAPTER VII

SUNSET PASS

TWO days later, however, a few hours after breakfast, Mrs. Polly Burton was also interested in Bettina's new acquaintance, and was making the young man useful.

The afternoon of their meeting Bettina had endeavored to introduce him, but had found this difficult because she did not know his name.

At the time, the Indian had met the situation with no more awkwardness than any other young fellow in the same position would have shown. He had at once given his name to Mrs. Burton as John Mase. However, both she and the girls, who were her companions, understood this was not the young man's Indian name, but probably the one which had been bestowed upon him at a government school and which he evidently preferred using at college and among strangers of the white race.

The following day none of the Camp Fire party saw anything of him, though frankly all the girls were curious, after learning of Bettina's escapade. It was on the second morning that, going back to his own coach from the dining car, the young man chanced to pass Bettina and Mrs. Burton. At the moment they were seated side by side in one compartment. But it was Mrs. Polly Burton—the official guardian of the new group of Camp Fire girls en route to their desert camp—who this time accosted him. For the young Indian had only bowed and continued to walk gravely on.

But the train was now entering the Arizona plateau country. By nightfall the Camp Fire party expected to arrive at a tiny village not far from Winslow and the next day begin the trek to their own camp.

Already the air was clear and brilliant. Away to the west were the outlines of high mountains and the peaks of giant canyons. Here and there were bits of dreary, olive-gray desert and then an unexpected green oasis.

In the night it appeared as if the face of

the world had changed, and with it the Camp Fire girls had changed also. If there were further coldness or friction between them, it had disappeared in their great common interest in the things before them and in the dream of their new life together in the desert. And, though they were too absorbed at the time for reflection, this is the way in which all friction between human beings may be destroyed; unconsciously the girls were acquiring one of the big lessons of the Camp Fire work—to live and think outside themselves.

At every station there were dozens of Indians offering their wares for sale. To eastern girls it seemed scarcely possible that they were still in the United States, so unlike was this new land. Yet the Camp Fire girls nobly refrained from making purchases, having solemnly promised to add nothing to their luggage until they reached camp.

Yet, in reality, it was the sight of so many Indian treasures which inspired Mrs. Burton to speak to Bettina's Indian acquaintance. She appreciated that he must know more of the requirements of camp life

in Arizona than she could learn from any number of books or from the conversation of a dozen acquaintances.

Yet possibly this was just a "Pollyesque" excuse. She may have been attracted by the young Indian's appearance, as Bettina had previously been, and simply wished to be entertained by him.

He was so grave and yet so courteous; and his voice had the gentle, caressing sound which afterwards the campers learned was a peculiarity of Hopi Indians.

"My father is a kiva chief," he explained good naturedly. "We have many chiefs among the Hopis, but the kiva is the underground chamber for our religious ceremonies, and the kiva chief has charge of them."

He seemed to be as willing to talk to Polly as he had to Bettina on their first meeting. But then Bettina was beside them, listening with the soft color coming in her cheeks from her deep interest, and the blue in her sometimes gray eyes.

She had been sitting with Mrs. Burton and separated from the others when the young Indian joined them. It was ex-

traordinary how soon they were surrounded.

First Peggy came and took a seat across from her aunt and then Alice Ashton, intending to make a special study of Indian custom, therefore felt it her duty to make the young man's acquaintance. Ellen Deal frankly leaned over from her place on the opposite side of the aisle and Gerry came and stood beside Bettina. Only Vera and Sallie Ashton appeared uninterested. Vera, because she was too shut up inside herself to be natural; and Sallie, because she was too much entertained by a light novel and a five-pound box of chocolates, into which she had been dipping steadily for several days without the least injury to her disposition or her complexion.

When the young Indian sat down she had simply given him a glance from over the pages of her book and then glanced at Bettina. Afterwards she had smiled and gone on reading. Sally and Bettina knew each other, of course, though not intimately, considering the fact that their mothers were sisters. But then they only met now and then and there was no con-

geniality between them. Alice and Bettina were better friends.

"Gerry Williams and Bettina looked a little alike," Mrs. Burton reflected, even while she was listening with interest to the conversation of their new acquaintance. But then it had become second nature to study the girls traveling with her ever since their departure.

"Gerry was perhaps prettier than Bettina, or at least some people might think so," Polly decided, feeling that in some way the idea was a disloyalty to her own friendship with Bettina's mother. And certainly Gerry was easier to understand!

She was standing now beside Bettina, her eyes a lighter blue, her hair a paler gold, but she was about the same in height and slenderness. And she was talking to the young Indian as if they had known each other a long time, while Bettina, now that other people were present, remained silent.

"Do you mean to be a chief yourself some day?" Gerry asked, her blue eyes widening like a child's from curiosity.

Gerry was a pretty contrast to the young

Indian; so delicately fair in comparison with his bronze vigor.

She looked almost poorly dressed as she stood by Bettina, but girls do not realize that handsome clothes are not necessary when one is pretty and young. Gerry's traveling dress was also blue, a brighter color, and equally becoming. Just for half an instant, and before the young man answered, it flashed through Polly Burton's mind that the young Indian might become interested in Gerry if they should chance to meet often. And Gerry had not the social training to make her realize how wrong it might be to cultivate such a friendship. The next instant, however, Mrs. Burton had forgotten the absurdity of her own idea. Besides, in all probability they would not see the young man again.

"I am studying law at Yale," he answered, surveying Gerry with a peculiar long stare he had given no one else. "It is my plan to work among my own people, but in the white man's way.

Before the morning had passed he had confessed to Mrs. Burton his own name. At least he made his confession looking

directly at her as the official chaperon. But really he seemed less conscious of the group of girls about him than any American college fellow could have managed to be.

"Se-kyal-ets-tewa (Dawn Light). The name was a beautiful one, but small wonder the young man preferred being called by his adopted name! He smiled when he explained that it was against the better judgment of a Hopi Indian to confess his own title. A friend might tell it for him, but to speak one's own name was to invite disaster.

Indeed, during the long morning's talk together, Mrs. Burton was puzzled to discover how far the young man had been converted to American ideas and ideals, and how far he still believed in and preferred his own. He made no criticism of either. He merely answered a hundred inquiries from half a dozen young women for the distance of a hundred miles or more, and never lost his temper or suggested that some of the questions were absurd. Only once did he smile with slight sarcasm. In her best Boston manner Alice Ashton had asked a question not complimentary to Indian women.

"The Hopi women have always had the privilege of voting," he replied. "I believe you will find them the original American suffragettes, since we came to this country a good many years before the Pilgrim fathers. You do not vote in Boston, I think." And then all the party laughed except Alice, who had not a sense of humor.

Although Sallie, her younger sister, was not supposed to hear, she flashed a pleased smile above the pages of her book. For Alice was the learned member of the family and Sally the frivolous, so now and then it was fun to score.

When lunch time arrived the Indian would not remain longer with the Camp Fire party, although Mrs. Burton felt it her duty to issue an invitation. She was pleased with his good sense in declining.

However, on leaving, he did say: "You may some day wish to come to my village in Oraibi, and then I would like to show you both beautiful and curious things."

For an instant, just as he was making this remark, his glance rested on Bettina. She could not have defined it to herself, but in some way his invitation appeared

to have been addressed to her. And Bettina determined to accept. The young Indian had interested her in the account he gave of his life and people. Bettina was not fond of a conventional existence and had often wished to see a simpler and freer life. The Hopi Indians appeared to have arrived at a curious combination of civilization and what we call savagery. For instance, the old and infirm in a Hopi community are never allowed to want. The "Law of Mutual Help" suggests a better way of life than Lloyd George's far-famed "old-age pensions" in the British Isles.

So Bettina sat dreaming and reflecting the greater part of the afternoon, while the other girls packed and unpacked, laughed and talked, excited over the prospect of arrival.

By an accident it was just before sunset when they reached a small wayside station known as Sunset Pass, because the Sunset trail led away from it. The party expected to spend the night at a big ranch house some miles away and, if possible, make camp the next morning.

But, as they left the train, suddenly the day had changed from heat to coldness. The girls and Mrs. Burton, as well, felt an uncomfortable sense of chill at their surroundings.

The little western station looked so bare and dreary. There were scarcely a dozen frame houses in view and these were all built alike and had no flowers or shubbery to relieve their dullness.

Near the station was an extraordinary structure, which covered more than a half acre of ground. It was built of wooden planks so crossed and recrossed as to form small rooms or pens. It might have been an enormous open-air prison and was in fact. Weird and lonely noises issued from it—the bleating of hundreds of sheep waiting for a cattle train to ship them to the eastern market.

Had she been alone, Mrs. Burton felt she would have given way to homesickness. However, as Camp Fire guardian and the oldest member of what was after all her own expedition, she must appear cheerful.

Then Marie unexpectedly relieved the situation.

Descending from the train to the wooden platform, Marie gave a long look at the surroundings and burst into tears. And her tears were not of the silent variety.

Sally Ashton and Peggy giggled irresistibly, but everybody smiled.

Marie looked so incongruous. Her costume was the perfectly correct one she wore when following her famous mistress through a sometimes curious crowd at the Grand Central Station in New York City, or through another almost equally large.

But it was Gerry Williams, after all, who went to Marie and patted her sympathetically on the shoulder. Mrs. Burton was pleased. And it was true that, in spite of other weaknesses, Gerry did things like this naturally, although she may not have been entirely unconscious, even at this moment, of their Camp Fire guardian's presence.

Gerry knew that the celebrated Mrs. Burton had taken a fancy to her and intended making the most of it.

Then Gerry's prettiness also appealed strongly to Polly Burton. It was of the

fair ethereal kind—an entire contrast to her own appearance. Moreover, one must remember how Polly O'Neill had always admired beauty and how great a point she had made of her friend Betty Ashton's in their old Camp Fire days.

Although Gerry's sympathy was not effective, Mrs. Burton knew how to check her maid's tears.

"I am cold; will you please put my fur coat on me, Marie," she suggested, whispering something consoling as Marie slipped her into it.

Then Mrs. Burton became nervous.

She and her Camp Fire party were standing alone on a deserted platform in a place which appeared to be a thousand miles from nowhere. For there was no one in sight except a little bent-over station master inside a kind of wooden box, who looked like a clay model of a man molded by an amateur artist.

As he did not emerge from his shack, Mrs. Burton started toward him.

Certainly she had expected that every arrangement for meeting them had been made beforehand, her husband having spent

a small fortune on telegrams for this purpose.

However, she had gone but a few steps when the tallest man she ever remembered seeing came striding toward her.

"I guess this is the party looked for," he remarked with an agreeable smile. "Arizona hasn't seen such a bunch of pretty girls in a long spell. Come this way; my wife is expecting you at the ranch house, but I got tired waiting for you and have been loafing about in the neighborhood."

Then he led the way, the Sunrise Camp Fire party of course following.

Waiting for them a little out of sight was an old-fashioned stage-coach drawn by a pair of fine horses.

The driver, who was Mr. Gardener, the wealthy owner of Sunset Ranch, assisted by the dwarf station master piled all the girls' luggage on top the stage; the heavier trunks were to be sent for later.

Then the coach started down a long, straight road facing the west.

The sky was a mass of color far more vivid and brilliant than an eastern sunset.

Beyond, almost pressing up into the clouds, were the distant peaks of extinct volcanoes. It was as if they had once flung their molten flames up into the sky and there they had been caught and held in the evening clouds.

It does not seem credible that eight women can remain silent for three-quarters of an hour, and yet the Camp Fire party was nearly so. Then they drew up in front of a big one-story house with a grove of cottonwood trees before it.

On the porch waiting to receive them stood Mrs. Gardener, the wife of their driver and the owner of the ranch house and the great ranch itself, near whose border the Camp Fire party expected to pitch their tents.

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE DESERT'S EDGE

SOON after sunrise the next day the Camp Fire party planned to leave the big ranch house.

Mr. and Mrs. Gardener had already assured them that their camping outfit had been sent on ahead the day before to the borders of Cottonwood Creek, so there need be no delay when the campers arrived. One of Mr. Gardener's own men had it in charge and, as soon as the expedition joined him, would aid in the choice of a camping site. Water, one must remember, was the great problem in Arizona and they must, therefore, select a place near a clear creek.

It was not yet daylight when Bettina Graham first opened her eyes the morning after their arrival, and yet she felt completely rested. She was sleeping beside Peggy, while on the opposite side of the room were Gerry Williams and the Russian girl, Vera Lageloff.

"Camping also makes strange bedfellows," Bettina thought with the quiet sense of humor so few people realized she possessed. She was not homesick—life at present held too many fascinating possibilities—but it was natural that she should begin thinking of her own home in Washington, and more especially of her own suite of rooms. They had been recently refurnished—as a birthday gift from her father—in pale grey and rose color, with the furniture of French oak.

Bettina appreciated that she had known nothing but the fair side of life—that it was almost a weakness of her father's to do more for her than she even desired. Senator Graham was not ashamed of his own humble past and the hard struggle of his boyhood; but, like many another self-made man, for this reason he wished his family to have every indulgence. Yet, although the close bond of sympathy was between Bettina and her father and Tony and his mother, Senator Graham did not wish his daughter to know only the life of luxury and self-indulgence.

Therefore, it was he who had been most

in favor of the western camping experiment. Bettina was to long remember his saying that he wished her "to find herself" and that this one must do away from one's own family.

In camping with so wealthy and famous a woman as Polly Burton there would be scarcely any great hardships to be endured. The new Sunrise Camp Fire girls were in more danger of having life made too easy for them rather than too difficult. Yet there might be circumstances now and then which would require good sense and courage to overcome. And, most of all, Bettina needed to see the practical side of every-day life.

"It was so like Polly O'Neill to get together such an extraordinarily unlike group of girls, but I had hoped Polly O'Neill Burton might have better judgment," Betty Graham had lamented to her husband and daughter, half in earnest and half amused.

But when her husband assured her that this was one of the particular reasons why he wished Bettina to form one of the group, Mrs. Graham, suddenly remember-

ing his humble origin, had been wisely silent.

Therefore, before setting out on their western trip, Bettina had firmly made up her mind to do her best to be friendly with the entire group of Camp Fire girls. And, on waking this first morning of their arrival, she was in a measure reproaching herself for her lack of effort on the journey.

Then unexpectedly Bettina sat upright in bed, feeling that she must get out of doors at once. She needed to breathe the fresh air in order to get rid of a stupid impression which had just taken hold of her.

All her life Bettina had been given to odd fancies—impressions which annoyed her mother deeply, and which she herself considered strange and uncomfortable. Just at this moment, for instance, and in the midst of her good resolution, Bettina had been assailed by a kind of presentiment. She had a feeling, which was part mental and part physical, that among the four girls in the room—for Vera and Gerry Williams were sleeping opposite herself and Peggy—one of the four of them, either con-

sciously or unconsciously would bring misfortune upon the others.

Yet, even as she thought this, Bettina was embarrassed and ashamed and, in the gray light of the early morning, she felt her cheeks flushing.

But deny or be ashamed of the fact as she would, nevertheless it was true that Bettina Graham, ever since she was a little girl, had a curious fashion of knowing certain events were to take place before they occurred.

She moved over now to the edge of the bed. Then a faint noise disturbed her.

Turning, she saw that Gerry Williams had also awakened and was half way out of her bed. She could just faintly see her delicate outline—the pretty tumbled light hair and smiling blue eyes.

Bettina made a slight sign to her and began quietly to dress. A few moments later the two girls slipped out and went downstairs and out of doors.

It was not dark now, for daylight was breaking. Guided by a sound they heard, the girls went to the left of the big ranch house. And there, tied to hitching posts,

were half a dozen burros with women's saddles on them; also a pair of little gray mules packed like camels of the desert with great loads hanging from their backs and extending out on either side.

A young man was bending over arranging one of these packs.

He looked up surprised as the two girls came toward him. He was dressed like the usual western cowboy, with the big hat and flannel shirt and his trousers ending inside his riding boots. He must have been about twenty-one.

Gerry smiled at him.

"This must be our caravan. I wonder if I can manage to ride? I never have in my life."

The young man lifted his hat.

"This is the Sunrise Camp Fire outfit. I am glad to meet some of its members at such an hour."

He pointed toward the east where the sun was now rising above the horizon.

"Perhaps I may be able to show you how to ride, as I am to be your guide."

In reply, Gerry laughed and Bettina shook her head.

"No, I think not," Gerry returned. "Mrs. Burton told us that she had engaged an elderly man and his wife to be our guide and cook. She wrote to secure them weeks ago."

The young man did not reply.

But an hour afterwards Mrs. Burton, who never remembered having gotten up so early since the long-ago Sunrise Camp Fire days, was engaged in argument on this same subject.

"But, my dear Mr. and Mrs. Gardener, surely you can see this young man is impossible, no matter how trustworthy he may be or how excellent a knowledge of the country he may have!" She gave a semi-tragic shrug of her shoulders. "You may not have considered that I am to have six young girls in my camp and one only a little older, besides myself and my maid. And now to hear we are to have an ex-college youth to look after us when I wished a man of fifty at least! You know yourself, Mrs. Gardener, that anything *may* happen."

Mrs. Burton was standing beside her host and hostess at one side of the big

ranch house veranda at six o'clock that same morning. She looked very fragile and young herself in comparison. For, although Mrs. Gardener was not tall, she made up in breadth what she lacked in height.

She now patted Mrs. Burton's shoulder, as if she had been a child needing encouragement.

"Nonsense, my dear; the young man will do you no harm. Husband and I are sorry that the man and wife we engaged for you disappointed us. But getting help of any kind out here is a problem. Besides, it's better that those Camp Fire girls of yours should do their own cooking. This one young man cannot do any mischief when there are so many of you. His tent will be far enough away not to make him a nuisance, and yet you can get hold of him when you need him. But you must remember that husband and I are near and ready to be of whatever service we can."

The fact that the new Sunrise camp would be anywhere from ten to twenty miles away did not suggest itself to Mrs. Gardener as representing distance, so little

do people in the western states consider space. Then she broke into cheerful little good-natured chuckles.

"Were you planning, Mrs. Burton, to be a kind of Mother Superior, and run a nunnery in our Arizona wilderness? You'll find it pretty hard work to hide those girls out here where girls are scarce. If they had not been, how do you suppose I would have gotten my good-looking husband?"

Then Polly turned in despair to Mr. Gardener.

"Your wife is an incorrigible woman. But at least tell me who this young man is, his name, and why you think he can be trusted as a safe protector for eight lone women? Really, you must find me a proper person, Mr. Gardener. Your young man will have to guide us today, since there is no one else, but in a few days—say, in a week—you'll get somebody else?"

Mrs. Burton looked so young and so alarmed at the responsibilities she had assumed that Mr. Gardener nodded his head reassuringly.

"Certainly, I'll find some one else for you in time, if you prefer. But Terry

Benton is all right. He got tired of school and came out here to work for me and has been with me on the ranch for a year. He is a pretty nervy fellow to undertake this job, I think, and he wouldn't except to accommodate me." Mr. Gardener deliberately winked a very large, childlike blue eye. "I had to produce some one to keep my word. But I tell you I am nervous about Terry. There are enough girls to take care of themselves."

Polly was uncertain whether she wanted to laugh or cry. Being a Camp Fire guardian under the present circumstances was not an easy position. Really, she had not anticipated the things that could happen.

"And you actually called our new guide, Terry, Mr. Gardener. You know that means he is an Irishman. Don't contradict me. Being Irish myself, I shall know when I see him, anyhow. I expect to have a good many problems with my Camp Fire girls, but the Irish problem I won't have."

Then, as Mrs. Burton turned away, she said, not aloud but to herself:

"Besides, Terry rhymes with Gerry, or

will rhyme with some one else. I wish there were no young men in Arizona for the next few months."

As a matter of fact, Gerry did require a good deal of assistance in the long trek to find a suitable camping place. But, then, the new guide's labors were of various kinds. He rode ahead on a lank, ugly-looking pony, his long legs trailing almost to the ground and followed at uncertain intervals by the girls and Mrs. Burton.

Now and then several of them would change from the backs of the burros to the solitary farm wagon, which carried their provisions and always Marie, who had wept once more at the thought of mounting a burro.

Polly was finding her maid all the problem Sylvia had insisted she would be. But there were three seats in the wagon, beside the place of the boy who was driving, and the other two were sufficient when the girls or their guardian grew tired. The little gray pack mules—Tim and Ina—trotted behind the wagon.

Certainly the Camp Fire caravan party formed an odd picture as they trailed

across the ranch. Yet they fitted into the scenery through which they were passing. Over the same trail in bygone days many other women had traveled. Today the girls were wearing their regulation Camp Fire dresses, only instead of skirts they wore khaki trousers and leather leggings and soft hats. Each girl had her hair braided and hanging down for greater convenience.

At first they only followed the ranch roads through great fields of purple clover and then through several acres of peach orchard. But at last they came to a wilder country near the outskirts of the big ranch. Here they were nearing the neighborhood of the Painted Desert.

Short stretches of sand, yellow with flowering bunches of rabbit brush or gray with the ice plant, showed here and there. Then a mesa suddenly arose many feet above the desert and often covered with grass, or a verdant bit of valley showed further on.

Riding ahead, the new guide frequently pointed out objects of interest—a giant yucca tree, or queer animals scooting to

their burrows. But never once did he betray his nationality by a single speech—not even by a light in his eye.

And, whenever she could remember, Mrs. Burton watched the young man narrowly. Yet it was hard for her to play chaperon when there was so much she wished to see and understand. And, really, Terry did seem to be a nice fellow.

An hour after the Camp Fire party had eaten lunch and recommenced their journey, they discovered their possessions waiting in the neighborhood of Cottonwood Creek and watched over by one of Mr. Gardener's men. Several weeks ago Mr. and Mrs. Burton had purchased the necessary camping outfit and sent them on ahead to be taken care of at the ranch.

So, the wagon joining the procession, the entire party journeyed on for another two hours.

It was Peggy Webster who finally selected the ideal mesa for the new camp, and as much for sentiment as any other reason. She was riding ahead when she chanced to see a mesa about twenty feet high, with a group of pine trees growing

upon it and a portion of the ground covered with soft pine needles.

Giving the reins of her burro to Bettina, Peggy climbed alone up the steep side, in which there were jagged steps of sandstone inlaid with agate.

The Camp Fire party halted below. Some miles beyond they could faintly see the outline of giant cliffs.

Mrs. Burton followed her niece, finding the view from this particular spot beautiful beyond words.

"May we have our camp here if we can find water near?" Peggy entreated. "We can see the sunrise over the hills, and this is to be a new Sunrise camp."

And Polly Burton nodded absently, thinking of another camp fire.

At the moment they were in the wonderful plateau country of Arizona and near the Painted Desert, which has no connection with the great Arizona desert to the south. Encircling them halfway around were giant hills and cliffs. The air was so clear one could see many miles. Small wonder that the restless Spanish adventurers of the sixteenth century came here

to search for the seven lost cities of Cibola!

A little later Terry Benton reported that clear water was not far away, and the other girls followed their guardian and Peggy to the top of their enchanted mesa.

A stream emptied into Cottonwood Creek, whose water was too muddy for the campers to use, but would serve for their horses. The creek was only a short distance away. Then the pine trees would be a shelter from the midday heat.

By nightfall the Sunrise Camp Fire tents were pitched. The men did the heavier part of the work, but the girls used their camp fire knowledge as never before in their simpler camping experiences.

Besides, they were inspired by the wonderful air and the romantic beauty of the country about them.

It turned out that Peggy Webster and Vera Lageloff were natural leaders in outdoor work. Peggy, because she had a great deal of common sense and no hesitation in telling the others what to do. Vera, however, worked with such quiet intensity that inevitably one sought to keep up with her.

Although, laboring with her hands as she had not in many years, Mrs. Burton observed that all the girls were doing their share of the work, except Sally Ashton. Sally appeared to be one of the charming, lazy people who take life easily. And there was no time to reproach anyone today.

There were two large sleeping tents for the Camp Fire girls and a smaller one for their guardian, who preferred being alone at night, except for the presence of the devoted Marie. Then there was the kitchen, or general utility tent, in case rain should make cooking or domestic work outdoors impossible.

However, the array of tents seemed unnecessary, for rain seldom falls in the early summer in northern Arizona. And that first night everybody slept out of doors, except Marie.

They brought out their blankets and there, on the top of the mesa, lay down under the stars. The night was too clear to fall asleep at once.

Terry Benton and the man and boy, who had assisted in bringing the outfit and

provisions to camp, found a place in the cottonwood grove below the mesa, within call but out of sight of the Camp Fire party.

To have learned to know and understand this group of girls it would have been interesting to have been able to read what was going on in their minds on this first wonderful Arizona night out of doors. But who of us is not thankful that our thoughts at least are our own?

CHAPTER IX

UNDERCURRENTS

A WEEK later and life among the new Sunrise Hill Camp Fire girls appeared to be moving with entire smoothness.

The girls had their regular schedule of work and it was simple enough to gain new Camp Fire honors in a land whose every phase was unusual and absorbing, and where work in itself became an adventure.

In a low camp chair outside her own tent one morning Mrs. Burton was resting an hour or so after breakfast. She assisted with the work whenever it was possible, but it was one of her doctor's orders that she spend a part of each day as quietly as possible.

Inside her tent she could hear Marie making their beds and sighing with each movement. Marie was still unreconciled. Still, she insisted upon wearing her con-

ventional maid's dress of black cloth in the mornings with white collars and cuffs and black silk in the afternoons, with always a tiny piece of white embroidery perched on top her shining black hair. She was very piquant, was Marie, but one can imagine how absurd she looked amid a group of Camp Fire girls in camp fire costumes on a plateau in Arizona.

However, Mrs. Burton was not worrying. Life at present was too delightful to allow small matters to count. And Marie would doubtless, become reconciled to the West, as many another equally homesick person has before her.

The day was blue and silver, the sky almost cloudless, the sun turning the sands to silver and glistening white on the summits of the cliffs beyond. But under the pine trees on top of the mesa it remained cool and serene.

Gerry Williams was lying at full length on the ground near Mrs. Burton. This she usually managed to accomplish, no matter how the other girls might try to forestall her. Undoubtedly, except for Peggy Webster, she appeared to be Mrs. Burton's

favorite, and Peggy was her own niece, almost her own child, as she had none of her own. But, then, Peggy was too straightforward, too downright, to let any one get ahead of her, even so clever a girl as Gerry.

Gerry had been shelling peas for luncheon, but had stopped with her task only half finished.

At present, a few yards away, Peggy was seated, stripping the husks from a great pile of sweet corn. Her hair was not long and hung straight and black just below her shoulders. She wore a band of scarlet about her head, holding the hair back from her eyes. Peggy's cheeks were crimson and her skin browner than ever from the Arizona sun. Partly to tease her and partly because she did look like an Indian, the other girls had recently insisted upon naming her Minnehaha, "Laughing Water," which Peggy considered ridiculous.

She was not laughing at present, however, but frowning and keeping resolutely at her task. Bettina sat near her, reading. Vera was on the other side, peeling potatoes. In some curious fashion the more unpleasant tasks in camp appeared always to fall to

Vera. There are people in the world like this, so that one wonders if they select the tasks or if the tasks select them. Alice Ashton and Ellen Deal were merely sewing on an outdoor costume for Ellen while Sally was pretending to write a letter.

The cover had been firmly placed on her box of chocolates. She had produced a box from her pocket a short time before, but, as Camp Fire guardian, Mrs. Burton had really felt obliged to object.

Too much eating of sweets was against all Camp Fire regulations. Moreover, where had Sally acquired such an inexhaustible supply? Terry Benton had been seen to appear with a box which he must have ridden a great many miles to secure. There must have been something about Sally which immediately suggested sweets to her young men friends. Although Mrs. Burton was secretly amused that the serious-minded Dick and Esther Ashton should have so frivolous a daughter, Sally must be made to respect rules and preserve her health.

"Mrs. Burton, do you know what I am thinking of?" Gerry asked, with a soft

inflection in her voice which was very attractive. "I wish we had a Camp Fire name for you, but I can't think of any title lovely enough. Bettina," she called across, "you are everlastingly reading. "What name can we give to the most delightful and gifted person in the world?"

Gerry's flattery was so transparent that Mrs. Burton laughed.

But Bettina was so absorbed that she did not understand, for she did not answer at once. And for the first time at Gerry's words, Polly observed that Bettina was reading when the girls were supposed to be at some kind of work.

It was Peggy who replied with an unmistakable lifting of her eyebrows.

"Why not call Tante the Queen of Sheba, Gerry, and be done with it? I suppose, because we know so little about her, she has always seemed to me to be the most extraordinary of women. Then, she made Solomon answer *all* her questions, and I don't believe even Tante could accomplish more than that."

Naturally the girls laughed at Peggy's speech and Mrs. Burton as well; neverthe-

less she did feel a little aggrieved. There had been a note of sarcasm in Peggy's voice which she had never heard there before in any reference to her. Could the sarcasm have been intended for Gerry or for her?

Polly was a little worried at the two girls' attitude toward each other, yet the fault did appear to be Peggy's. Could Peggy be a little jealous at her interest in a strange girl, of whose history she knew nothing.

But Peggy had finished her task by this time and, getting up with a great kettle of corn swinging on her arm, remarked cheerfully: "Glad I am through with my work, especially as I won't be at home to eat any of the corn. You remember, Tante, that Bettina and Vera and I are going off for a ride with our new Camp Fire guide. We have finished our share of the work.

Vera continued being busy for a few moments, but Bettina got up slowly, still holding the book half open in her hand.

Something in her manner annoyed Mrs. Burton and she spoke quickly and thoughtlessly after her old fashion:

"You and Vera seem to have been indus-

trious enough, Peggy, but I cannot see that Bettina has done a conspicuous share."

She was sorry the next instant, for Bettina made no reply but, flushing, walked quietly away.

She was not accustomed to criticism and it had been difficult to keep her temper.

But Peggy waited until she was out of hearing and then deliberately set down her kettle.

"That was not fair of you, Tante, and you give a wrong impression of Bettina to the other girls. She was reading some Indian legends which I asked her to learn and tell at our camp fire this evening. They form as much a part of our honor work as other things, and I thought, if we were to visit the Indian reservations and see their summer festivals, it would be interesting to know more about them. Good-by; don't worry about us; we shan't be long."

Then off she and Vera went toward their sleeping tent in order to change to their riding clothes.

They left Mrs. Burton feeling suddenly discouraged with herself as a Camp Fire guardian when, a few moments before, the

atmosphere had been so serene. She was particularly sorry that the one girl with whom she seemed least able to get on was the daughter of her most beloved friend.

But Gerry interrupted her train of thought. She was sitting up now, and close enough to take hold of Mrs. Burton's hand. Gerry always appeared sweet tempered, no matter what occurred.

"You have not told us, nor let us choose a name for you," she murmured with the half-affectionate and half-admiring manner which she always showed to the older woman.

But this time Mrs. Burton was not interested.

"Wait until I have earned a title. I may not be a worthy Camp Fire guardian. But, in any case, the girl among us whom we shall decide has done most for our camp fire during this summer shall have from me, if it is possible, the gift she most desires."

Then, before any one could answer, a man came toward them over the trail at the top of the mesa.

He was not a prepossessing figure. He must have been over forty years old and

his skin looked as brown and as hard as the bark on a tree. Indeed, Sally Ashton insisted that he had once been a tree in the petrified forest nearby and, in some strange fashion, had been transformed into a man.

Yet Mrs. Burton looked at him with pleasure. His age and his lack of attractiveness was greatly in his favor, in her eyes. But, then, he carried himself erectly; walked with a long, swinging stride, which was peculiar to the West; and obviously had a sense of humor.

Mr. Gardener had brought him to camp a few days before, to act as the second of the Sunrise Hill Camp Fire guides. Mrs. Burton must have made the Gardeners see that Terry Benton was an impossibility. Not that any fault was to be found with Terry himself except that his age or rather his youth was against him.

The new guide Mr. Gardener introduced as an old friend of his—Mr. Jefferson Simpson—who was temporarily out of a job. The truth of the matter was, Mr. Simpson had been a fairly rich man until a few weeks before, but a silver mine he owned had suddenly ceased producing and

Mr. Simpson's ranch and his money had gone to keep the stockholders from loss.

At this moment he lifted his hat and, though he appeared perfectly polite, one could guess that he was secretly amused at his latest occupation. He may have had a variety of jobs in his day, but never anything like this.

"Good morning. The ponies are ready and needing exercise," he announced.

At this moment Marie appeared at the door of her mistress' tent.

Her costume was irreproachable; her figure as nearly perfect as a small, well-rounded person's figure can be. But Marie's expression, as she surveyed the new guide, changed from the disconsolate to the disdainful.

"Evidently this was the type of man the West produced. He had no style, no manners—and his clothes!" As Marie gazed at the rough gray flannel shirt, the rusty gray hat and discolored khaki trousers, and her mind went back to the immaculate persons she was in the habit of seeing in the lobbies of the theaters on Broadway, she visibly shuddered.

It was barely possible that Mr. Jefferson Simpson understood her expression.

"Perhaps Mamselle will come along; the trail may be a bit steep, but we shall not go far; and perhaps it may be best to have an older person with us. There is a little trick burro I can have ready in a moment."

Marie refused to reply; shrugging her shoulders, she vanished inside the tent.

But Mrs. Burton exchanged a brief glance with the new Camp Fire guide. Did he also understand that Marie was extremely sensitive about her age and that she expected to be regarded as a girl, although undoubtedly she must have been nearer thirty than twenty. The shadow of a smile was exchanged between them.

At the same instant Peggy and Vera and Bettina came out from their tent, having changed into their riding costumes—short skirts and trousers and high boots.

Peggy kissed her aunt farewell and, rather shyly at her invitation, both Vera and Bettina followed suit. Not that Polly Burton was usually demonstrative, except with the few persons whom she really

loved. But she wished to make amends to Bettina and, at the moment, this appeared the only way.

Later, she and the remaining four girls watched the others wind their way along the trail below the mesa and disappear toward the northwest.

After lunch, when Polly had gone inside her tent to write her husband, and Alice and Ellen Dean were taking afternoon naps away from the heat of the early afternoon sun, Sally Ashton and Gerry Williams went down toward Cottonwood Creek together. They did not mention their going to any one, but it was cooler in the neighborhood of the creek.

CHAPTER X

THE RIDE

THE three girls and Mr. Simpson were riding slowly across the Arizona sands toward the neighborhood of the Little Colorado River.

It was true they were only on an exploring expedition, for they had solemnly promised not to enter the region of the Painted Desert nor one of the Petrified Forests until the others could be with them, even if they should reach the borders.

They were really impatiently waiting to make these expeditions, because of their Camp Fire guardian. It was she who had suggested that they first learn something of the routine of their new camp life and more of the climate of outdoors Arizona, before attempting any strenuous sight-seeing. The fact was—and the girls understood it—that Mrs. Burton was not yet strong enough to accompany them, and that she would be desolate at being left behind. For, in spite of all her travels

and experience, she felt as much enthusiasm and excitement over their plans as any one of the Camp Fire girls.

Nevertheless, she was willing to agree that it might be a good scheme to find out something of the nature of the country they were to journey across, and how difficult the traveling might be. As Peggy, Vera and Bettina were really more accustomed to riding than the other girls, they were permitted to undertake the first short trip alone.

Their guide rode first, with Peggy next, Vera following and Bettina last. Their burros were more accustomed to moving in single file and, in most places the trail was so narrow, this was necessary.

Because the day was so brilliant, at first the glare of the sun was uncomfortable. They rode for several miles beyond the ranch before seeing anything except stretches of sand broken by an occasional mesa towering many feet above them, or else a tiny oasis in the midst of the sands. But beyond them, always in dim outline, were the cliffs bordering the smaller canyons of the Little Colorado.

With Vera between them, Bettina and Peggy found it difficult even to call out often to each other.

Yet, unconsciously perhaps, there were already three little groups amid the new Camp Fire club. Bettina and Peggy had been friends ever since they were little girls and, while they might be unlike and might now and then disapprove the one of the other, yet always they were loyal and devoted. Vera was in a way an odd side to the triangle.

For several years Peggy had known her; indeed, they had met soon after Vera's father had come to the Webster farm. But there had been no intimacy between the two girls. It was Billy's odd friendship with the Russian girl that had led his mother to take an interest in her and ask her to join the Camp Fire club, of which she was guardian.

And it was Billy who had commended Vera to his sister's interest just before the girls left on the western trip together.

"Be good to Vera, please, Peggy. She is queer like I am, and perhaps we don't think about things as other people do. But

she is the bravest person in the world and the truest, once she cares for you. She does not talk much, but try to understand her."

And Peggy was trying, partly for Billy's sake and partly for Vera's own. She had a strange feeling about her younger brother—a feeling his entire family shared. None of them could decide whether he was going to be a genius or whether he was just "queer," with the genius left out. And this subtle difference is perhaps the most important fact in this world. So Billy's family worried over him and were frequently angry with him, and yet never forgot him.

Then Vera was interesting in herself. She was not so shy as her companions believed; in reality, her shyness was more reserve while she was quietly studying their temperaments. It may be that she had some plan in mind which might some day make this knowledge valuable. In the meantime she quietly attached herself to the company of Peggy and Bettina. Now and then the two girls were a little bored by it, preferring to be alone, and yet they did not wish to appear unkind.

This morning Peggy would like to have discussed several questions with Bettina, but not before Vera, since they were intimate personal subjects, not camp fire matters. In fact, they concerned Gerry Williams and her aunt, for Peggy had noticed something which she believed no one else had.

But the three girls would not dismount to rest or eat lunch until they came to the neighborhood of the river. They were not far, now, from the Painted Desert. Beyond were the buttes where the Hopi Indians had built their villages so that far above the plain they might be safe from the wild Apaches.

The girls found a shelter of rocks near the river. Below was a steep descent to the water.

Vera was serving the luncheon; Peggy was lying flat down on the warm rocks with her arms outstretched; while Bettina sat with her chin in her hand, watching the far horizon.

"I wonder if we shall ever come across that young Indian again?" Vera said unexpectedly. She happened at the moment to

be passing a paper napkin filled with sandwiches to Bettina.

"Yes," Bettina answered in a matter-of-fact fashion so that Peggy turned her head toward her and stared.

"Why do you think so, Anacaona, Flower of Gold?" she inquired slowly, smiling and using Bettina's Indian Camp Fire name purposely. "Did he tell you at your first meeting that he meant to find you again?"

Bettina shook her head, but she had flushed and was sitting upright, her expression puzzled, but no longer dreaming.

"It was funny for me to say that, wasn't it? But perhaps Vera's asking me the question at that moment was odd. No; I suppose it wasn't. It was natural that we should both be thinking of the Indian villages, with the outline of them before us and all of us so curious to see what they are like. And I—oh, well, why shouldn't I be truthful? You may be amused or think I am ridiculous, if you like. But I have felt, all along, our meeting with the Indian was not just accidental. We are sure to see him again and I know he will make our stay out here more inter-

esting if we do. He can teach us such a lot of things."

"And I suppose Bettina can teach him nothing. Queer you liked him, Bettina, when you are usually so shy with strangers," Peggy said slowly. In reality, she was paying but little attention to what she was saying, for she was almost asleep. The sun was so hot and the wind so sweet, and they had ridden steadily for several hours. Peggy did not know that she could feel such a pagan as she had in this past week. No wonder the primitive outdoor peoples worshiped the Sun God.

Mr. Simpson had gone to give the burros water and would be back in quarter of an hour. In reality, she was more sleepy than hungry, and they must soon go on with their riding.

This time Peggy closed her eyes entirely, although still believing that she was only drowsy and not asleep. And yet, the instant after, she felt her own arm lifted from the rock where it had been extended and flung violently across her body. Then she heard a cry from Bettina and saw her spring up.

Vera's movement had been too quick for Peggy either to see or hear. But, getting up she now saw that Vera must have leaped forward and seized her arm in order to save her. She must have acted instantaneously and instinctively, for there had been no time for taking thought. Now she was leaning against a rock, with her face slightly pale and her lips set. Just beyond lay a rattlesnake with its head crushed against the opposite ledge of stone.

"That was one of the quickest and bravest things I ever saw anyone do, Vera," Bettina said, her own face paler than the girl's to whom she spoke. "I believe I saw that snake about to strike at Peggy's arm at almost the same instant you did, but I was too paralyzed with horror to cry out; certainly I did not move. But I shall never forget, Vera, and I am more than grateful to you."

Peggy laughed, but a little uncertainly, although she was really less concerned than the other two girls, not having been aware of her own danger.

"After all, Bettina dear, I am the one to be grateful to Vera—not you."

She held out her hand. There was always something a trifle boyish about Peggy, she was so direct.

"It would have been pretty horrid to have started the summer with an accident, and Tante would have been absurdly worried. Billy told me what a lot of courage you had. I should have been sorry if you had suffered because of me. It was stupid of me to have been so careless. Enough people have warned us to look out for dangers here, but the country is so alluring one forgets that evil things love the sun as well as the good.

But Vera had come forward and was picking up the scattered luncheon which she had thrown down in her haste.

"Please don't say anything more," she remarked a little impatiently. "What I did was the simplest thing in the world. You must remember I have lived outdoors and worked in the fields since I was a little girl. In Russia we used to take the babies out to the fields in baskets, and some one had to watch by them. Promise me not to speak of this again." Vera flushed. "Billy is mistaken in thinking I am brave;

only there are some things I am not afraid of. I am a coward about others."

There was no doubting her sincerity and, while Peggy was hesitating what to say next, Mr. Simpson came along the path leading one of the burros, the others meekly following their leader.

A few moments later the girls mounted and started on again. The afternoon's ride was to be more difficult. They were planning to follow an old trail which led along the side of the river and now and then came close to the cliffs and deep ravines which fringed the river bed on the northern side.

They rode as they had in the morning, with the guide ahead and Bettina in the rear. But if the girls had any desire to exchange confidences at present, it was out of the question. One might be familiar with horse-back riding and fairly valiant in spirit and yet, according to the old phrase, find one's heart in one's mouth every few minutes.

In places the trail was scarcely a yard wide, with a sheer wall of rock on one side and a sharp precipice on the other.

Yet the burros moved on as serenely as if they had been following a main traveled road.

Bettina wondered half a dozen times if the other girls felt as nervous as she did. Once or twice she smiled, remembering her previous experiences in riding. In the country, visiting Peggy, she had ridden over the fields occasionally, but ordinarily her riding had been confined to a riding school in Washington, or to morning rides in the parks and suburbs of Washington. It was true that she had been a little vain of her ability at jumping hurdles in the riding school contests, but her father had never been willing to have her take fences in English fashion in cross-country rides. Now, however, she wished that she had learned not how to jump hurdles but how to keep her seat winding up an almost perpendicular trail without being frightened. The little burro jogged along, now apparently standing nearly upright, now swinging from side to side, but of course the rider was perfectly safe so long as the burro did not slip. And this they never did—or so one was always told in the burro country.

Every once in a while Mr. Simpson would look back and call out reassuringly, and Bettina would unite with the other girls in cheerful replies.

Really, the scenery was so wonderful, it was annoying not to be able to give it one's full attention!

Ahead Bettina saw the trail rising almost to a peak in front and narrowing at the same time. Involuntarily she reined in her burro and thus dropped a few yards further behind the other riders. Then it occurred to her that she would prefer walking and leading her burro for a part of the way. In this fashion she could rest and enjoy the landscape and, though Bettina did not make the confession to herself, she had really more confidence in herself than she had in her burro.

Calling ahead her intention to the others, she believed they heard. Indeed, she thought she heard Peggy laugh in her teasing, boyish fashion. Then Bettina dismounted, but kept the reins in her hands. The others could not travel very rapidly up so steep and rocky an incline, and so would not get far in advance. In

case they did, they must of course wait for her until she caught up.

But Bettina was not to find walking so easy as she had expected, and then her burro would not go slowly. He kept trotting on ahead, forcing Bettina to run beside him on the narrow path until she was out of breath. The stones cut even into her heavy-soled riding boots.

She was angry; the burro was so stupid—so ridiculously devoted to one idea—like stupid human beings frequently are. He had been trained to follow his companions, and follow them he would at whatever cost. The other burros were forging ahead so that, apparently, his reputation depended on keeping his place in the line.

Once Bettina stumbled and heard the earth sliding down the ravine, but would not look. All her life gazing down upon great distances had made her sick and dizzy, but then a great many persons are affected in this same fashion.

Regaining her foothold, Bettina must at the same time have lost both her temper and her judgment. With the idea of forcing her burro to walk, she struck him with

a small switch which she had picked up along the way.

Immediately, shaking his obstinate head, he jerked and ducked at the same instant. Clumsily Bettina lost her hold on the bridle and then beheld her small steed go plowing up the narrow incline, leaving her well behind.

The situation was so absurd and a little tiresome. However, Bettina realized she had brought it on herself, though this is but small consolation in adversity.

Alone, Bettina walked more slowly. After all, was she as sure-footed as she had presumed? There was comfort in the idea that, as soon as her burro rejoined the others, they would find out she had disappeared and wait until she came up to them.

Bettina did not realize that, hearing her burro jogging on behind at an even pace, the girls naturally believed she was riding him. One could not easily look behind during such an ascent.

Mr. Simpson, in front, also failed to miss Bettina for about five minutes. The time could not have been longer than that.

Until then, glancing back of him he could see the three burros, but of the riders only Peggy who rode next him. And he heard no cry of any kind.

Finally they reached a broader space—a kind of small plateau where there was a wonderful view of the river and of the giant depression to the northwest that cradled the famous Painted Desert.

“Suppose we rest for a moment,” Mr. Simpson called back.

Stepping off his broncho, for his legs almost touched the ground as he rode, Mr. Simpson turned to Peggy. Then, in a flash he discovered the third burro stopping quietly when the others did, but without a rider.

“Miss Graham has chosen to walk up the trail; I’ll go and see if I can help,” he said hastily. And before Peggy and Vera were fully aware of Bettina’s disappearance, their guide had started down again.

“Tiresome of Bettina. Why did she not tell us if she meant to dismount?” Peggy said irritably. She was not nervous, but the trail was a winding one, and she

could not yet see Bettina climbing up toward them. They must, in a few moments, of course.

They waited five moments; then ten. At the end of fifteen minutes Mr. Simpson returned.

"We had best start back on the homeward trail. I don't understand my not being able to find Miss Graham. I must look more thoroughly as we go down.

Jefferson Simpson was not the kind of man who lost his nerve. He had confronted difficult situations a good many times in his rather strenuous existence. The idea of playing guide to a number of young women had struck him as an amusing departure. He had been a rancher, a miner, a cowboy, an Indian agent. Why not add another rôle to his many parts for a few months at least? It had not struck him that his new occupation might have a serious side. At present, however, it did. He did not like not having found Bettina. There was simply no accounting for her disappearance in so short a time, and along a trail where no one else had lately passed.

Fortunately Mr. Simpson's manner never

betrayed his emotions. Before Peggy and Vera he behaved as if Bettina must be comfortably awaiting them not far off. But, while he led Bettina's riderless burro, both girls saw that he stared over the sides of the ravines every foot along the route.

And they looked, too, although the thought that any human being should ever slip in some of the places made one ill.

In a little more than an hour, when they had again reached the place where they had eaten lunch and without finding Bettina, the new guide insisted that Peggy and Vera find their way back alone to their camp.

It was a difficult situation to know what one should do; but they must take their chances of finding the route. Mrs. Burton must learn what had become of them.

And to desert the lost! Jefferson Simpson's queer brown face twisted. "This is a sheep country, you know, and I've been a shepherd along with the rest of my jobs. 'There were ninety and nine.' Remember the rest of that old song. Tell Mrs. Burton I'll be home with the one that is lost

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in a short time after you get there. Good-by."

So Vera and Peggy, seeing that there was nothing wiser to be done than follow their guide's advice, waved farewell to him and took the long trail alone toward camp. But they did not mind the journey if they could have known where Bettina had vanished.

CHAPTER XI

DAWN LIGHT

IT was curious that the guide had not seen the place where Bettina had fallen. A few moments after her burro had deserted her, Bettina, hurrying up the incline to join her companions, slipped on a loose stone. Yet this would not have been serious had she given up and allowed herself to go. Instead she stumbled sideways, tried to regain her balance, stumbled a second time, and then, looking down, found herself at the edge of a ravine that had a sheer descent of thirty or more feet. Even now Bettina might have saved herself by dropping down on her knees or flinging herself backward. But the sight of the precipice must have made her dizzy, or else she was too frightened to think. For she went over quietly and without even a cry for help. And afterwards she did not call out. In falling Bettina's head had struck against a jutting rock, so

that she lay crumpled up between two walls of stone with a deep crevice between them. Her position was a strange one. She seemed to be sitting in a giant chair, except that one leg was bent beneath her and her head drooped forward on her breast.

Yet the stones and earth were misplaced where Bettina had slipped, and if the searchers had been less anxious, or more accustomed to their task, they must have found her. Mr. Simpson had not this second excuse. When he went back, after leaving Peggy and Vera, he did discover the place where Bettina had disappeared, but by that time Bettina was not there.

Yet, certainly an hour had not passed since her two friends and their escort had gone slowly past.

It was perhaps about fifteen minutes after they had gone when a young man appeared on the same trail. He was not riding, but walking more swiftly and more surely than any four-footed animal trained to the western trails.

He wore an odd costume—a soft shirt of an unbleached cotton almost the color

of the yellow sand; a pair of leather trousers fringed at the knee and held about the waist with a broad leather belt brightly decorated in beads, forming designs of animals and birds. His legs were bare and his feet in moccasins.

Yet he was whistling as he came along—an unusual air and an unusual act for an Indian. He was whistling the “Marseillaise,” perhaps the greatest song of national freedom in the world. And the young man was an Indian, although his skin was only a light bronze. The carriage of his head, the free movements of his body, and in some strange way his expression betrayed him.

So far as one could have observed him, he seemed to be looking neither to the right nor the left; neither the glory of the encircling ledge of blue hills nor the river gorge interesting him. Nevertheless, when he came to the spot where Bettina had lost her footing, he stopped as abruptly as an animal who is suddenly arrested by an unexpected smell.

The next instant the young Indian was lying across the trail, with his head extend-

ing over the ledge and gazing down at the broken shelves of rock.

At first he could see nothing unusual.

It was afternoon and the sun was casting a brilliant, slanting light across the ravine. For the instant it blinded one. The next, the Indian's keen eyes were caught by what looked like a golden ball caught between a wide split in two rocks about midway of the precipice. The illusion was a ridiculous one and yet it made one think of some golden legend of the sun.

However, almost before the impression came it was gone, and the Indian discovered a figure held between the two rocks. He could not, of course, see anything except that the figure was a woman's, and that the sunlight had made the hair a bright amber.

Yet, it was so extraordinary to find a human being alone and in such a plight, it is small wonder that the young man remained staring. He was a dreamer also. No man or woman can spend long hours in great open spaces alone with only the wind and the sky and the desert for company without being either a dreamer or a fool. Soon after he began climbing down

the sides of the ravine as quickly and as unafraid as another man might descend the rounds of a ladder.

He used both his hands and feet, stepping from one almost invisible projection to another, until he reached the summit of what appeared like a stone chair with two great sides in which Bettina was imprisoned. Then he dropped lightly down to the ledge and stood upright about a foot away from the still figure.

She was not a woman, but a girl; this he saw at once, and she appeared only unconscious. A cut was bleeding where her head must have struck. Yet what could have happened that she could be thus alone?

Several times the young Indian called. No answer came. Then he lifted Bettina and began the ascent of the slope. Another man—not accustomed to the outdoors and not an athlete—could not have accomplished the feat of getting Bettina back on the trail again without assistance. She was slender enough, but tall and at present a dead weight.

Nevertheless the young Indian lifted her

across his shoulder and, holding her with one arm, climbed up the way he had come. He was panting and his mouth set with fatigue and determination, however, when he finally brought her to the small plateau where he could lay her down comfortably. It was the place where her loss had been discovered a short time before.

The Indian must have known the locality, for he went away and in a little while came back with water which he held in a giant cactus leaf.

But Bettina did not respond to the cool water on her face, nor to the air, nor her change of position.

Plainly her rescuer was puzzled what to do next. He stood erect a few moments gazing up and down the trail, as if finding it impossible to believe that the girl he had just found had been deserted by her friends. Yet, calling again, he had no answer.

Something must be done; she must be taken to some one who would properly care for her. How else could one know how serious her injury? She appeared to be only stunned by her fall, and yet the cut near her temple might be serious.

A second time the Indian picked up Bettina. This time, instead of continuing along the trail in the direction he had been taking, he turned backward; otherwise he must have met Mr. Simpson.

But the young man knew of no one in that direction to whom he could safely deliver his charge, while a few miles to the north near the border of the Painted Desert was one of the wisest persons in his acquaintance. He had to leave the river trail and strike across the sand dunes, but the way was familiar. The distance meant but little for the Indian walked so swiftly.

Once he thought he felt the figure he carried stir a little, but looking closely could see no change.

Nevertheless it was about an hour before sunset when the Indian came to the friend he sought in the neighborhood of the desert. Nearer now he could see the ancient terraces of the five Hopi villages built on top the three mesas on the far side of the desert, and only to be entered by long climbing up the precipitous walls.

But the home he sought was not in one of the villages.



A SECOND TIME THE INDIAN PICKED UP BETTINA
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The Indian would not have confessed, but he was glad when he saw a small house, apparently built of clay dried by the sun, standing with one wall formed of a sandstone cliff.

Squatting in front of this house was an Indian woman who appeared very old. She had a big jar of brown pottery before her and with a yucca stem was making a geometric design upon it. This was Nampu, who had come from the village of Hano to settle at the edge of the desert, the better to pursue her work unobserved. She was one of the most famous pottery makers in all the region. But she was more than this. Nampu was a medicine woman. It is one of the peculiarities of the Hopi Indians that they have medicine women as well as medicine men.

The young Indian laid Bettina down at old Nampu's feet.

"She had fallen over a cliff; I found her and did not know what to do. Therefore I came to you," he explained as briefly as possible.

But the Indian woman made no reply at all; she merely grunted. However, she

put down her work and, picking Bettina up, disappeared inside her house.

The young man lay down on a mat outside the opening which served for the door. Ten minutes went by. He could hear the woman moving about inside. Then he thought he heard a voice that was not an Indian's.

Afterwards Nampu came out and sat down at her pottery again.

"She will be all right soon. Sleep now best. Awake, tell us where she come from. Then you can go find friends."

So they waited and Se-kyal-ets-tewa saw the sun setting behind his village and heard the peculiar bark of the coyote that comes at evening, and the short, quick yelp of the prairie wolf.

Only once did the companions speak. Then the young man asked.

"Where is Dawapa?"

"She come later; gone to get water."

Really it was Bettina who aroused them both.

The Indian woman had taken off her shoes, so she came quite noiselessly and stood at the door of the hut.

She was puzzled beyond understanding by what must have happened to her. But she was not frightened. For Bettina was not made nervous or unhappy by the circumstances that would have alarmed most girls, but by little ordinary things which would have affected some girls not at all.

Now the beauty and the strangeness of the scene before her filled her with an emotion that was part pleasure and part pain. The evening was so beautiful. Never had she seen such a glory of color in the sky, and the Indian woman and the youth outside the door were like sentinels of some past age.

Curiously it was Bettina who recognized having seen her rescuer before. He had not known her as the girl whom he had met on the train coming west in all the distance he had carried her to Nampu's hut. But, then, Bettina's eyes were closed, her face smeared with blood and dirt, and she was wearing a costume that seemed strange to the young man. It was in a way like an Indian girl's and yet oddly different. For Bettina was wearing only a part of her Camp Fire costume—the rid-

ing trousers and boots being an original departure—because of the unusual circumstances of their present camp fire life in Arizona.

As soon as she walked toward him the Indian got up and stood as erect as he had that day of their first odd meeting. But this second time was far more interesting.

One could not have mistaken him for any other nation than his own at this hour.

Still he showed no sign of ever having seen Bettina before until she put out her hand.

“I have something to be grateful to you for; I am not sure just how grateful I should be,” she began. “But I am glad that it is some one I have met before who has helped me. Now will you be good enough to tell me how I can manage to get back to my friends. We are camping at one end of the Gardener’s ranch near the neighborhood of Cottonwood Creek. Is there any way I could drive back?” Bettina smiled. “I am perfectly all right, only I do feel a little weak and tired. Yet my friends will be so uncomfortable not to

know what has become of me. You remember meeting Mrs. Burton, don't you?"

"Yes," the young man answered.

Nampu grunted again.

"You stay here the night; Gardener ranch fifteen, twenty mile away. Tewa tired."

The young Indian shook his head.

"I will find your camp tonight. You must stay here, Miss Graham." He had not forgotten Bettina's name, at least.

But now it appeared strange to have him speak and behave in so quiet and well-bred a fashion. Seeing him in an Indian costume, here in the land of his birth and among his own friends, one forgot the young man's college training, and all that was supposed to go with it.

"But the distance! It is not possible," Bettina urged.

The young man's lips arched, showing white, strong teeth.

"I have been winner of the prize as runner at our Snake ceremony. If that is not enough, I won the championship of the United States in the University long-distance running contests this spring."

Before Bettina could reply, the sound of

some one approaching caught her attention.

Then, as she turned, she saw a girl of about her own age coming near, holding on her shoulder a large water jug. But the strange fact was that the girl was blond—fairer than she herself or than Gerry. Indeed, she had hair light as corn silk, pale blue eyes and a too white skin. Nevertheless she was dressed like an Indian maiden. Her hair was arranged over her ears in great puffs resembling squash blossoms, signifying among the tribes of the Pueblo Indians that the girl is unmarried.

"This is Dawapa," the old Indian woman said civilly.

But Dawapa went shyly and quickly by into the house, not waiting for any explanation of Bettina's presence in her home.

And it was not until afterwards that Bettina learned Dawapa was an Albino, and that there are such girls and boys born now and then among the Hopis.

CHAPTER XII

THE PAINTED DESERT

BY noon the next day Mrs. Burton and her niece arrived at Nampu's house near the Painted Desert to find Bettina.

The Indian showed them the way.

The night before, he had appeared at the new Sunrise Hill camp at a little after ten o'clock, finding only Mrs. Burton and a few of the girls there. Peggy and Vera and Ellen Deal had insisted upon joining the searching party from the Gardener ranch led by Terry Benton, who had gone out to look for Bettina.

Fortunately the Indian had come upon them and told them of her rescue on his way to camp so they were following behind more slowly. It was thus that he arrived alone.

Mrs. Burton's welcome was very enthusiastic; indeed, she showed even more gratitude and friendliness than Bettina.

In a way she was more relieved. Moreover, almost at once she recognized the young man as the one whom they had met on the train.

She was walking alone up and down near the border of their mesa, and had been doing this almost without ceasing ever since Vera and Peggy returned bringing the news of Bettina's loss. They did not mention what they feared, but the same impression came readily enough to the others. And Mrs. Burton thought of almost nothing else.

Over and over she kept repeating to herself that if an accident must happen to one of the Camp Fire girls, it had better have been any girl than Bettina. But not because she cared for her most.

The Arizona night was very clear, so that she saw the Indian a long way off. For the first few moments she hoped, of course, that the oncoming figure might be Bettina's; but a little later the idea was impossible. For she recognized that the figure was a man's, and from his odd costume that he must be an Indian.

He came striding on toward the mesa, swiftly climbed the steep path and walked

directly up to Mrs. Burton, who was waiting there alone. The girls were in their tents—not sleeping, but talking together in low voices. Sally and Gerry were whispering — a fashion they frequently indulged in.

Ten minutes before, Marie had urged her mistress to lie down, but Mrs. Burton had insisted that she would be far less nervous if allowed to remain out of doors.

“I came with news of Miss Graham; she is safe,” the young Indian announced as soon as he was within speaking distance, sensibly relieving Polly’s anxiety at once.

Something—the curious contrast between his cultivated manner and voice and his costume—made Mrs. Burton recognize him at once.

“Then our meeting on the train was a happy accident. I felt it might be,” she returned cordially, holding out her hand.

“Sit down beside me, please, and tell me just what has happened.”

Now, that the strain was over, Mrs. Burton felt oddly weak in the knees, as one often does after a period of anxiety.

Yet, later, when she knew that Bettina

was safe and not seriously hurt, Mrs. Burton found that her sense of romance had not so completely disappeared that she did not enjoy continuing to sit there for a few added moments.

The young Indian was so handsome; his personality and his appearance so fitted into the unusual and picturesque landscape. Then there was something in his grave courtesy which pleased the older woman.

He slept that night wrapped in a blanket on the mesa at some distance from Mrs. Burton's tent, next morning acting as her escort.

But it was not possible that the little party of three start off at once. First, Mrs. Gardener had to be persuaded to come down from the ranch house to spend the day and night with the other Camp Fire girls. For Polly had concluded, since Nampu's house was so near the Painted Desert, the girls could come on the following day and join her there for their first expedition into the desert.

On their arrival Polly had found Bettina a little pale and tired, but otherwise wonderfully recovered from Nampu's healing herbs.

Then, after a little talk, the three girls—Bettina, Peggy and the Indian girl—had wandered off, while all afternoon Mrs. Burton sat with old Nampu and Se-kyal-ets-tewa.

He did not seem to care to be with the girls.

Mrs. Burton wondered at this. Yet she did not understand Indian customs.

There was undoubtedly a deep intimacy between Nampu and the young man. Could it be possible that the daughter, Dawapa, was the bond?

Although living at a little distance from her own people, Nampu was a distinguished woman among them. In the Indian world there was no more famous maker of pottery. Her daughter was being trained to the same work. Nampu was a typical squaw—silent, a little dirty, squatting all day in the sun, with only her wonderful old wrinkled hands moving like an artist's and setting her apart from the rest of her tribe.

About the daughter it was more difficult to determine. She seemed abnormally shy—more like a frightened wild animal

than a human being. Then it was difficult to determine whether her odd appearance made her beautiful or ugly. Doubtless her own people might think her beautiful, because of the contrast her fairness offered.

Nevertheless the Indian boy was so unlike either Nampu or her daughter, separated from them by what appeared like centuries in education and feeling.

Yet, watching him today, the great actress was not so sure. She liked to study faces and temperaments. The Indian had changed since their meeting on the train. Then he had been far more like an American or, rather, like the type we now regard as American, since, after all, he had the first right to this name. But in this short time since his homecoming, he was not the same. It may be that his Indian costume made the difference. Yet it would be interesting to see just how much influence modern civilization did have upon the Indian character. Was it not, after all, just a veneering, and would the young man not return to his own customs and his own people when the American influence was removed?

They were sitting in front of Nampu's

house while Mrs. Burton made these reflections. She was resting in the shadow of the cliffs behind the hut on a splendid Indian blanket of black and red. Near her Nampu was molding a great earthenware bowl, shaped and colored like a great red disk cut in two and hollowed on the inside. Around it the crude outline of a snake lay coiled. Already Polly had asked to be allowed to purchase it.

A few yards off Se-kyal-ets-tewa sat upright with his legs crossed underneath him. He was silent unless he was spoken to, but he seemed to keep his eyes fixed on the three girls who formed another group at some distance off.

None of his new acquaintances at their second meeting thought of or spoke to the Indian by the English name of John Mase—the name by which he had introduced himself on the train.

Suddenly Mrs. Burton turned to him.

“I hope you will come to see us as often as possible at camp,” she began, speaking with her usual impulsiveness and thinking it might be amusing to study the different influences at work in the Indian youth.

"I would like to have you teach us of your people and some day take us to your village perhaps. Later on we are hoping to see your great August festivals."

Mrs. Burton had not meant to be condescending, but there may have been an unconscious suggestion in her tone. The Indian hesitated and frowned. Then, seeing that the three girls were coming toward Nampu's house, he rose up.

"Thank you," he answered, but without signifying whether his reply meant agreement.

Next day Peggy Webster asked him the same question.

She and Bettina and Dawapa were standing in a small group at the entrance of the Painted Desert, waiting for the others to join them. They had walked from Nampu's house—a distance of only a mile or two.

"You will not disappoint us, Se-kyal-ets-tewa," Peggy urged, thrusting her hands into her pockets in a boyish fashion and nodding her head vigorously. "But if you do decide to come won't you give us some other name to call you by? Life

isn't very long at best and Se-kyal-ets-tewa——”

The Indian smiled. He understood and liked Peggy, as all other boys and men who were worth while did. She was so simple and straightforward and so without the least trace of coquetry.

“Yes, if Mrs. Burton and the rest of you really wish it, I will come when I can, although I have other more important work to do,” he answered proudly. Then smiling again, “Perhaps the last two syllables of my name will be less difficult. Tewa alone means ‘Keeper of the Trail.’ ”

He was looking directly at Peggy and talking to her, not appearing to notice Bettina nor the Indian girl.

Nevertheless Bettina replied:

“I was lucky when you chanced to be the ‘Keeper of my Trail’ yesterday.” She was smiling, also, and yet she spoke seriously. “I wish I knew how to thank you.”

A moment afterwards the entire party was entering the Painted Desert.

It was as if they had come into a country where, long centuries ago, Titanic artists

and alchemists had poured out their paints and jewels.

The mounds of earth with plateau-like surfaces called mesas were red, blue, green or orange and took strange, fantastic shapes.

Fallen between the mesa were petrified trees which had split open and were filled with precious stones. Now and then a petrified tree appeared embedded in the sandstone of the mesa showing along its side.

No one of the party realized how many miles were walked that day. Nevertheless, after a time, Bettina naturally grew weary. Yet she did not wish to mention her fatigue, realizing that she had simply not entirely recovered from her experience of thirty-six hours before.

So, whenever it was possible she sat down, allowing the others to wander on without her.

They were about to start on the homeward journey when she chanced to speak to Tewa again, and this time they were alone.

Bettina was sitting in the sand with her chin in her hand by the side of a giant petrified tree. She was staring at the place

where it had split open in falling, showing not only stones but precious and costly gems on the inside.

Bettina was thinking so deeply that she did not hear the Indian coming toward her.

He did not speak until she seemed to feel her eyes drawn away from the things at which she was gazing, by another pair of eyes looking upon her. Then she started a little.

"Mrs. Burton sent me to tell you that you were to ride back to Nampu's house in the wagon. You did not hear me coming? The Indian moves silently because the moccasins we wear are best suited to the sands of the desert."

The young man, thrusting his hands inside his belt, drew out an exquisite pair of moccasins made for a woman and of softest leather and embroidered in bright beads.

"You will wear these and you will be less tired," he said.

Were they a gift and, if so, what ought she to do?" Bettina did not know whether she should accept them.

But the Indian seemed to take her acceptance for granted.

"I am sorry to have startled you," he continued, holding out his hand to assist her in getting up.

But, for a moment after she had arisen, Bettina stood beside him, making no effort to move on.

It was odd how little shyness she felt. It was easier to talk to this Indian; to explain to him what she was thinking and feeling than to any young man acquaintance of her own race.

"I wonder if you have ever read the Bible," Bettina asked unexpectedly, and then, seeing the Indian looked startled, she laughed.

"Oh, I am not a missionary trying to convert you. It is odd, but this place suddenly made me think of a chapter in Revelations. I suppose because I never could have imagined anywhere else such a profusion of jewels."

"I have read your Bible," the young man returned. "But I do not believe in it for the Indian. For us our own religion seems best. Yet I think I can recall the verses you mean."

"And the foundations of the wall of the

city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second sapphire; the third a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

“The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth a topaz; the tenth, chrysoprasmus, the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.”

The young man pronounced each word slowly and Bettina held her breath. Never could she have a more curious experience than this. She would never forget these past few minutes.

The air of the desert was like crystal—the place a marvel of strange color. And as the Indian recited, Bettina seemed able to count each jewel in the stones before her.

How strange life was, that she should hear these exquisite symbolic verses repeated by a Pagan in a land which had once belonged to his Pagan ancestors.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

THIS morning there seemed to be a great deal of activity about the new Sunrise Hill camp. But then, no matter how people may talk of leading the simple life, there still remains a good deal of work to be done to make even the simple life agreeable.

The four tents stood in a kind of half circle in front of the small group of pine trees, which had influenced the choice of the camping site. Before the central tent was a tall totem pole, as yet uncolored and uncarved, which was later to record the experiences of the Arizona Sunrise Camp Fire club. It had been purchased from an Indian wood carver and had a strange head on top, resembling a sardonic American eagle.

Below and beyond the chosen mesa, and some distance off, lay Cottonwood Creek. The creek, fringed with tall cottonwood

trees, was nearly a mile in length. To the south lay the Gardener ranch and toward the west the beginning of the desert, with the Hopi reservations farther on.

This morning, half a dozen yards from the kitchen tent, the camp fire was burning, and above it hung a huge iron pot.

Nearby, peering through a pair of large round glasses, Alice Ashton was engaged in studying a recipe book. The book had been compiled in Boston and Alice was baking beans for lunch. As the book had been a present from her mother to the Camp Fire club, Alice, although she knew exactly how the beans should be done, preferred resorting to it, as she always did to the wisdom of the printed page.

Ellen Deal was endeavoring to render her assistance but evidently her services were not desired. Nearly a month having passed with the Camp Fire club in Arizona, Ellen and Alice had become great friends. Alice conceded that the other girl had a scientific mind and was an authority on health but, when it came to baking beans, Boston must remain pre-eminent.

Mrs. Burton, sitting under one of the

pine trees in her favorite place and reading a lot of mail, now and then glanced about her.

Alice's earnestness was amusing—what a contrast she and Sally were, although they were sisters with only two years difference in their ages.

There were a good many letters—two from her husband, one from her sister, Mrs. Webster, and another from her beloved Betty Graham in Washington.

Mr. Simpson had driven to the post-office box on the Gardener ranch and returned with the mail only half an hour before. Since then he had been engaged in digging at the pathway up the side of their mesa, so as to make the ascent less difficult for the campers.

"Marie!" Polly called. But when Marie did not answer, she did not call a second time. What was it about their kind, ugly guide that seemed to inspire her maid with a kind of viciousness? Marie had just marched to the side of the mesa and was at this moment shaking Indian blankets just above Mr. Simpson's head, while he devotedly dug and chiseled at their trail.

Marie did look ridiculously picturesque in her French maid's costume of black and white, waving the brilliant, many-colored Indian blankets in the breeze, like some small insect with wings all too big, which seemed for the moment about to carry her over the cliff.

Mr. Simpson must have been amused also, for he climbed up his own steps to speak to her, and Mrs. Burton did not hear what he said, but saw Marie flounce and toss her head after his remark.

No one of the other girls was in sight at present.

Vera, Peggy and Bettina had taken one of the burros and gone off to stroll along the creek and gather wood which they stacked on the burro's back for the camp fire. Sally, who was the acknowledgedly lazy one of the Camp Fire girls, was probably off pretending to read somewhere, and Gerry might possibly be with her.

But the Camp Fire guardian was glad to feel that no one was far away and that things were comparatively peaceful. Indeed, except for Bettina's accident some little time before, which had amounted to

almost nothing, they had spent several delightful weeks at camp. Now and then they, of course, took trips about the country and had seen several of the smaller nearby villages; also they had visited one of the petrified forests, but there had been no difficulties which were not amusing. And the girls seemed to be growing more friendly under the influence of the Camp Fire club life.

Polly was thinking of these facts with a degree of quiet satisfaction. Her husband's, her friends' and her sister's letters had all faintly suggested possible complications. None of them appeared sure of her as a safe and sane Camp Fire guardian, no matter how good her intentions. Her husband naturally was uneasy about her health, realizing she had much responsibility to which she was unaccustomed, while Betty and Mollie were uneasy over their only daughters. Mollie really could be forgiven, for Billy had been ill for several weeks and she herself was worn with nursing. She wrote that he seemed to have greatly missed Vera's companionship. And Mrs. Burton wondered what her eccen-

tric little nephew could find in the companionship of the quiet Russian girl.

But at this moment she saw Gerry at some little distance off coming across the sands and then more slowly climbing up the steps of the mesa.

She looked very fair and sweet as she came across the trail. She wore no hat and her pale yellow hair was the color of corn silk. It was tied back loosely with a band of ribbon and she wore an ordinary morning camp fire costume. Gerry had not yet gotten beyond the first order of the camp fire.

Her hat, however, was filled with lovely wild flowers, which she cast at once into her Camp Fire guardian's lap.

"This is my morning tribute, dear lady," she began. "I have been wandering about looking for them for you."

Now Polly Burton was aware that Gerry always flattered her, but she did not dream for a moment that this had anything to do with her especial fondness for her. There was an unusual bond between them—one which she had not yet confided to the other girls and probably would not until their

camp fire days were over. Besides this, Gerry did seem to have a particularly sweet nature, even though the usually reasonable Peggy did not like her. But, then, the other girls did, and Peggy was a little spoiled and apt to be too blunt. She and Gerry would become more friendly later, was always her aunt's conclusion.

"Were you alone, Gerry?" Mrs. Burton asked. "You know I would rather you girls did not go far from camp by yourselves. This country is too unfamiliar to all of us."

But she picked up the flowers and held them lovingly against her face. They had not the usual fragrances, but a kind of aromatic sweetness.

"Oh, I wasn't alone all the time," Gerry replied evasively, although the older woman did not notice this. "I followed Vera and Peggy and then came back along the creek."

"But what about Bettina?" Polly asked carelessly, "I thought she went with the other two girls."

She was not especially interested in her own question, for she was really thinking

of her husband. But something in Gerry's manner at this instant arrested her attention.

Gerry had not answered, but instead had turned her face and was gazing at the landscape.

"Where was Bettina?" Mrs. Burton asked more sharply, annoyed simply because Gerry had not replied to her question.

Then Gerry turned slowly around.

"She started with the other girls, but said she was tired and sat down to rest under one of the trees by the creek. On my way back I saw that Tewa had joined her there. I did not know you expected him at camp today. He has been here twice already this week to tell us Indian stories. I sometimes wonder how he manages to come so far."

"Oh, that is no concern of ours," Mrs. Burton returned lightly, "so long as you girls are interested in what he has to tell us. And Bettina seems to be more entertained than any one else."

Gerry laughed a curious little laugh and then stopped abruptly.

She was sitting on the ground facing

Polly, with her hands clasped gracefully over her knees and her head tilted back so that her blue eyes were upturned.

"I wonder if you will be cross with me, dear lady, if I say something to you?" she asked with a slight flush and tightening of her lips, which were rather thin.

Still Polly was not paying serious attention to her companion.

"Why should I be angry, Gerry? I have not been with you so far in our acquaintance, dear. You have been a more satisfactory Camp Fire girl than I believed you could be at the beginning. Besides, I made up my mind that if I was permitted to be a Camp Fire guardian, I must reform my own temper before I could influence the girls. So fire away, Gerry, and test me," she ended lightly, slipping her letters back into the envelopes, but glancing at them again as she did so.

Yet Gerry did not speak at once.

"I was just wondering if you knew how intimate Bettina and your Indian protégé are," she said finally, "and if you mind? It seems odd to me when you were not willing to have Terry Benton continue as our

guide, when he was a nice American fellow. And this Indian——”

Impulsively Gerry reached out and took hold of Polly's hand, looking at her with a kind of playful apology.

“I don't mean to criticise you, you know. I would never do that, and besides, I wouldn't dare anyhow. But I feel you cannot have noticed their friendship. It is only because I realize Bettina does not understand some things as I do; has never been up against the world as I have that——”

“Be quiet, Gerry.”

Undeniably Mrs. Burton's amiability, which she had announced as necessary to her Camp Fire work, had suddenly vanished.

“One thing I shall never allow in my Camp Fire club is for one girl to talk to me unkindly of another. If Bettina is friendly to Tewa it is because she is grateful to him, as I am. He is an unusual fellow and she may help him with his education. I am afraid, Gerry, you do not understand just who Bettina is, nor who her father and mother are.”

Polly hesitated. After all, Gerry's in-

fluences had been so different. She must not be too angry with her.

"Don't let me hear any suggestions of this kind again about any one of the Camp Fire girls," she ended more kindly. "It is because I want you to forget a good deal of nonsense that I brought you out here with us."

Gerry said nothing and, getting up, Polly laid her hand lightly on Gerry's head.

"Let us forget this past few moments altogether—both of us," she suggested, and walked away.

She had seen Bettina and Tewa strolling slowly away from the neighborhood of Cottonwood Creek toward their mesa. Bettina was nearly as tall as the Indian and in her picturesque camp fire costume, did not look out of place beside her companion.

CHAPTER XIV

ANTAGONISMS

DINNER was finished and yet it was early evening.

Over in the west the sunset was flaming the sky with the brilliant colors of this land of clear atmospheres.

Seated in a group about a smouldering outdoor fire were eight girls—seven of them in ceremonial camp fire costumes and one of them dressed as an Indian. Curious that the Indian girl should be the fairest of them all!

Her pale yellow hair was fixed in the elaborate fashion of the Hopi maidens, with great loops over each ear, her dress of white. About her throat were several strings of uncut turquoise. The dress itself was made of a single piece of woolen cloth—really a white blanket—with a deep border of bright blue and red at the bottom and at the top. Around her waist was a white belt and on her feet soft white moccasins.

sins, with strings of white leather wound about her legs almost to the knees until she looked as if she were wearing white top boots.

Dawapa was also in her ceremonial costume, as she was the guest of the Camp Fire girls. At the moment she was deftly fashioning a baho, or feather prayer plume. The other girls were watching her with interest.

They were at some distance back from the fire with the evening wind blowing the smoke away to the northwest among the blue peaks of the San Francisco hills and the gorges of the Grand Canyon.

Gerry Williams was sitting next to Dawapa, with Sally Ashton on her other side, Sally's brown head resting against Gerry's shoulder and her lids closing now and then over her big brown eyes. She looked like a sleepy, sweet-tempered doll.

Opposite were Vera and Bettina, and in front Alice, Peggy and Ellen. They had broken their usual Camp Fire circle formation in order the better to observe their guest.

Their Camp Fire guardian was not with

them at the moment, having gone to her tent after dinner. It seemed better, now and then, to Polly that she leave the girls alone.

On the ground beside Dawapa was a large round basket, flat like a tray and woven in red and green grasses, with a disk inside to represent the sun.

In spite of the lateness of the hour, as it was still sufficiently light, Alice and Ellen and Vera were working at their own weaving. Since her arrival two days before, the Indian girl had been teaching the Sunrise Hill Camp Fire club to improve their hand craft in more than one way. Although Dawapa was not yet an artist to equal her mother, her skill in basketry, in silver work and more especially in pottery had awed the American girls. It was one thing to be a modern Camp Fire girl, no matter how successful in the obtaining of the green honors, and another to have been born to the life of the camp and the inheritances of generations of hand workers.

"What is that pretty thing you are making used for, Dawapa?" Gerry asked, glancing up from her own pretty hands,

which were idly crossed in her lap, toward the other still fairer girl. Gerry did not seem to be making a great effort to add to her Camp Fire honors and thus attain to a higher membership.

The Indian girl was almost abnormally shy and timid—or at least she appeared timid to the Camp Fire girls. But she had been to a government school and spoke a fair amount of English.

“We plant our prayer plumes on the altar when we pray to the Indian Gods,” she answered gently, with a faraway look in her light blue eyes. “Our first prayer is for good thoughts—then that our children may be wise and strong, and that the God of the Sky may be glad of us.”

Gerry laughed. It was odd how few things seemed to strike her as serious.

Alice Ashton frowned. She was not pleased at her younger sister's intimacy with Gerry, of whose history they knew almost nothing.

“That is lovely, Dawapa; thank you for telling us,” she returned, wondering if the Indian girl would feel that they had less good manners than her own people. “After

that, do you not pray for something you especially wish for—the thing you most desire?”

Alice spoke earnestly and the other girls remained silent. Perhaps there was not one among them who did not cherish a secret wish; perhaps for some simple, material possession, or perhaps an ambition which only the future could gratify.

But Dawapa only nodded her head and did not reply.

Gerry leaned over.

“Oh, if that prayer plume thing brings one good luck, give it to me?” she demanded, reaching over and making an attempt to take the baho from the Indian girl’s hand.

But Dawapa held to it firmly.

“Don’t do that, Gerry,” Bettina Graham said hastily and with a note of authority. “Dawapa told you that the prayer plume is a part of the Indian religious ceremony.”

After all, Bettina Graham was her mother’s daughter, and courtesy and good breeding had been the rule of her life. She did not dislike Gerry; indeed, she had not paid a great deal of attention to her,

but occasionally something in the other girl's behavior offended her almost unconsciously.

And, in a way, Gerry knew and resented this. In fact, she had immediately decided that what Bettina's friends called shyness was only hauteur, due to her father's prominence and her own social position.

At Bettina's speech she now flushed angrily, but drew away from the Indian girl. Then she laughed a faintly mocking, insinuating laugh.

"I beg your pardon; I had forgotten what a convert you have become to 'the poor Indian.' "

Just exactly what Gerry meant by this stupid speech, Bettina did not appreciate. However, she did know that it was her intention to be rude.

"You have extraordinarily bad manners, Gerry. I wonder if it is because you do not know better?" Bettina returned quietly. By this time she was also angry, but she had a self-possession which gave her the advantage. Yet, the moment her sentence was finished, Bettina regretted it. Among the new Sunrise Hill Camp Fire

club this was the first open quarrel, and the other girls were looking uncomfortable. Bettina had not meant to make her accusation so sweeping. Having lost her temper, she had simply said more than she should, as most of us do under similar circumstances. Moreover, Bettina felt a little stab at realizing that Gerry would doubtless tell her side of their difficulty to their Camp Fire guardian. In Bettina's mind there was little doubt whose part she would take.

"You are hateful, Bettina," Sally Ashton murmured, still a little sleepily. She had not listened carefully to what had been said, but wished to announce herself as Gerry's champion. The truth was that Alice had recently lectured her younger sister on the subject of their intimacy, and Sally intended to show how utterly unimpressed she was by family advice.

If Gerry intended continuing the quarrel she did not say anything more at this instant. For, glancing up, she had seen that Mrs. Burton had come out of her tent and was walking slowly towards them.

Bettina also had seen her and was a

little puzzled that Gerry did not make the best of her present opportunity. Then she concluded that Gerry was a little ashamed, as she herself was, over their childish lack of self-control. Perhaps next day there would be a chance to straighten things out when they were alone, particularly as they were expecting guests to arrive at their camp fire at any moment.

"Our visitors have not yet appeared, have they?" Polly asked a moment later, as she sat down next to her niece.

Straightway Gerry kissed her hand to their Camp Fire guardian across the intervening space, looking as sweet and unruffled as if nothing unpleasant had occurred.

Really, by this time only Peggy showed any especial expression of annoyance. Peggy simply refused at all times to pretend to any state of mind she did not feel. Although she had not spoken, recognizing that she had no part in Bettina's and Gerry's quarrel, none the less was she ruffled.

Recognizing this fact, but not understanding the cause, Polly slipped her

arm affectionately through Peggy's and held her close for a moment. She could feel the girl grow less rigid; see her expression change and soften. There was no doubting the sincerity of the devotion between the niece and aunt, even if now and then they did not entirely approve of each other's actions. Mrs. Burton, however, had not the faintest idea that Peggy would at any time oppose her in a matter of importance. Perhaps she had grown too accustomed to believing in her own charm and unconsciously in the influence of her own success. So far no one appreciated the fact that Peggy Webster was one of the few people who absolutely had to think for herself, and to be faithful to the truth and to justice as she saw it.

"Terry Benton's note to me said he wished to bring half a dozen other friends with him tonight, so that was rather an unnecessary question on my part," Mrs. Burton went on, wondering why the group of girls remained so silent and constrained, and glancing with more attention from one face to the other.

Some little time before, Mrs. Burton

had been compelled to surrender the idea that she could order her Sunrise Hill Camp Fire club as if it were a nunnery and she the Mother Superior. At least, this was the accusation which Mrs. Gardener had certainly made on their arrival. Really, Polly had only wished to keep clear of entanglements. But Terry Benton, although not permitted to remain as guide, had manifested no ill feeling. Indeed, ever since he had been a more or less frequent visitor at camp, bringing an occasional friend with him. He and Gerry and Sally seemed to have formed a kind of three-cornered friendship.

Tonight, however, was the first time that he had suggested bringing so many visitors at one time. But Terry had written to say he had a friend from the East who had just arrived at the Gardener ranch and wanted to call. There were also four or five western fellows who declined to be put off any longer.

Therefore Mrs. Burton had acquiesced and written to say she and the Camp Fire girls would be glad to see them. After all, she remembered how important a part

their boy friends had played in her own Camp Fire days. Perhaps it was a sign of age to have expected other girls to be different. Anyhow, Mrs. Burton had the grace to laugh at herself after submitting to the inevitable. And she was now first to spy their expected guests.

But the moment after, Sally also had seen them and jumping quickly to her feet, all her sleepiness vanished, began waving a yellow scarf.

The newcomers made an effective picture, riding in single file along the trail which led from the Gardener ranch. Although the sun was not entirely down, the moon had risen and was showing faintly in the opposite sky. Later would be revealed, the Pleiades which the Indian calls the time of the sweet influences.

The young men were wearing rough-rider costumes. Observing Sally's signal, Terry Benton, who was leading the line of march, rose in his saddle and saluted. The next instant six other men followed suit and together they halloed across the desert the long, curious cry of the western cowboy.

But the girls had also risen in a picturesque group about their camp fire, calling back in return the now world-famous camp fire cheer:

“Wohelo for aye, Wohelo for aye, Wohelo, Wohelo,
Wohelo for aye!

Wohelo for work, Wohelo for health, Wohelo for
love.”

Ten minutes later, leaving their burros below fastened to the trees near Cottonwood Creek, Terry and his friends, after climbing the mesa, came directly toward Mrs. Burton. And before Terry could introduce any one of them, a young man held out his hand.

“I have met you before, Mrs. Burton. You remember you said I could not be a member of your Camp Fire club? Well, I have done the next best thing, I am a visitor at the Gardener ranch. Benton and I are old friends, and when he wrote me of what was going on out here, I guessed the rest. Besides Mrs. Webster and Mrs. Graham confessed. I think they want a first-hand report of Miss Bettina and Miss Peggy from me.”

But Peggy had by this time joined her aunt.

“Ralph Marshall; how extraordinary to see you out here! You are the very last person I would ever have dreamed of. I thought, after your visit to us, you were to stay on and study scientific farming with father.”

“Oh, well, I have concluded to be a ranchman instead,” Ralph returned, smiling and shaking hands with Peggy.

Peggy was pleased to see him. He had been a guest at their place several times while she was growing up and was really a charming fellow, if a little spoiled by his father's wealth. Then his people were friends of Bettina's mother and father, as well as of her own.

CHAPTER XV

THE STORM

RALPH MARSHALL decided that he never had seen Bettina Graham so agreeable nor so good looking as she was tonight.

Ralph was a great admirer of Bettina's mother; indeed, whenever he made a visit to Washington, he was always in Mrs. Graham's train. And he knew that Mrs. Graham wished him to be friends with her daughter; indeed, she had frankly told him so, announcing that she believed the one would be good for the other. For Bettina, in her mother's eyes, was too grave, too given to yielding to odd fancies and too indifferent to people, while Ralph, in contrast, was too frivolous and fond of society. He was some day to inherit great wealth, so his father was trying vainly to interest him in something of importance. His excursions to Washington and his connection with Senator Graham were in order to

inform him of national affairs. Failing that interest, for Ralph had announced himself as bored to death by politics, he had gone for a few weeks to the Webster farm, pretending to have developed a curiosity concerning scientific farming.

But, really, Ralph was only concerned at present with having an agreeable time. He was not a student and had barely managed to be allowed to remain at college. He was not a first-rate athlete, for athletics required too much self-sacrifice to appeal to Ralph. But he had a charming voice and was one of the stars of his college glee club, and there was not a man in college who danced better.

So he and Bettina really were too great a contrast in all their ideas and desires ever to have been intimate friends up to the present time, in spite of the family wishes.

Tonight, however, Ralph had concluded that Bettina was almost a real girl, and not a prig given to writing poetry and reading a lot of dull books that would bore any natural human being to death. She was evidently interested in all kinds of outdoor

sports, which she must have learned through her Camp Fire work, and Ralph always had been forced to concede that Bettina knew how to dance. She was so tall and slender and, just as she had a peculiar light grace in walking, so she had it in dancing.

Ralph and Bettina were dancing together at the time the young man was reaching these conclusions—dancing outdoors on the smooth plateau of the mesa on a wonderful, white night. Bettina's hair was shining in the moonlight, and she was stirred out of her usual coldness by the beauty and novelty of her surroundings. So it was small wonder that Ralph, who was a romantic person, was at present taking a more kindly view of his companion.

However, Bettina had not changed to the same degree in her opinion of Ralph. She was still convinced that he was exactly the kind of man she would always least admire. Bettina's ideal was represented by her father, who had made his own way by a strenuous and self-denying youth. Moreover, Bettina had never forgiven Ralph for his discovery of the poem she had

written and believed she had safely burned that afternoon at the Webster farm.

But the music ceased. After Bettina and Ralph stopped dancing they walked together to the side of the mesa and Bettina sat down.

The music consisted of a Victor, which Mrs. Burton had brought with them as a part of the camping outfit, and tonight Marie had the music in charge.

She looked like a little French figure of Pierette in her tight-fitting black dress, and with her face oddly white in the moonlight. For Marie insisted upon following the French fashion of using a great deal of white powder in spite of her mistress' remonstrances.

The Victor had been placed in a convenient position and Marie mounted on a stool beside it. Almost for the first time since their arrival in camp, Marie appeared almost gay as she ground out the records and watched the dancers.

Mr. Jefferson Simpson had come forth from his lone tent near the creek and established himself several yards away, to smoke a meditative cigar and observe the

proceedings with his twinkling, philosophic eyes.

"It is great out here, isn't it?" Ralph said, as he arranged himself in a picturesque attitude, lying at full length on the sands near Bettina's feet

"And it wasn't so worse—that little poem of yours I found this spring; at least, not for stuff of that kind." And Ralph spoke with a fine scorn of the poets and poetry of all ages.

"I can repeat the thing, I think. Indeed, to tell you the truth, after I read it over I learned the words and have been singing them to some music I know."

And Ralph sang under his breath in a charming voice:

"In the moon of the peach blossoms,
Toward the land of the setting sun,
Ghosts of old camp fires keep calling;
Camp fires whose race has been run.

"I can see the sands of the desert;
I can hear strange desert cries;
And ever my thoughts go homing
To a tent under desert skies."

In the beginning Bettina was uncertain whether she was pleased or annoyed at Ralph's reminding her of an embarrassing experience. But undoubtedly, by the close of the song, she was flattered. Ralph really made the most of her little poem.

"The meter is very poor—so poor I threw my poem away—but the music is lovely and you sing awfully well," Bettina conceded, finding herself not so bored by her companion as she always had been in the past. But then, they had scarcely been together for a ten-minutes' conversation alone in their entire acquaintance before tonight, both Bettina and Ralph having taken pains to avoid it.

"Anacoana, Flower of Gold, is your Camp Fire name, isn't it?" Ralph continued, gazing somewhat sentimentally at Bettina with his hazel-brown eyes. His hair was nearly the same color, and his teeth strong and white. Indeed, the only contradictory thing in Ralph's appearance was his mouth, which was fine and clearly cut—contradicting the weakness of the rest of his face.

This time Bettina was annoyed. It was useless to try to be sensible with Ralph Marshall, as he was always under the impression that he must be languishing when talking to a girl.

And Bettina did not like this; neither did she know exactly how to behave under the circumstances. It would have been simple enough to have laughed Ralph into better judgment of her and of the situation. But Bettina was no longer sufficiently at ease.

"Oh, that is rather an absurd name which my father once chose for me as a Camp Fire name and by which I have been embarrassed ever since," she answered coldly, not returning her companion's gaze, but sitting up stiffly.

Her attitude gave Ralph the desire to flee. Bettina was a literary iceberg, after all! But how escape when one was lying at full length on the ground gazing with at least an appearance of ardor upon an unresponsive maiden, unless some one came to the rescue?

Ralph glanced about and suppressed a sigh of relief.

Terry Benton and a girl were coming toward them.

And Bettina was equally relieved by the vision of Sally Ashton—a Sally no longer suggesting the least appearance of sleepiness, or of anything but sweetness and animation. It is curious, but there are a number of girls in this world—and an equal number of women—who really never do wake up until something masculine appears upon their horizon.

Sally was laughing and talking, her cheeks crimson and her big brown eyes shining.

“We have come to look for you, Bettina. Tante was afraid you and Mr. Marshall might be lost.” For Polly was ‘Tante’ to all of the Camp Fire girls who were the daughters of her old friends, as well as to her own niece.

The fact was, however, that she had not suggested to Sally to look for Bettina and Ralph—the suggestion had come from Gerry. And Gerry had not mentioned Bettina. She had simply told Terry Benton that she had not yet met his eastern friend,

and did he suppose that Ralph had already run away?

So Terry and Sally had good-naturedly set off to find him.

Sally's explanation had been the only excuse she could think of at the moment, since, under the circumstances, she did not wish to mention Gerry's name. She was not really bad-tempered or deceitful; it seemed impossible that any daughter of Esther and Dick Ashton's could be! But the fact was that Sally was like a pretty, soft kitten. She did not wish her pleasures interfered with, and if they were she was capable of a scratch. Moreover, she had fallen very much under the influence of an older girl who had experiences of life which Sally considered extremely fascinating. And at present Gerry's power was perhaps stronger than the Camp Fire's.

Bettina and Ralph both got up hastily. The four of them were about to move away when, unexpectedly and almost simultaneously, their attention was attracted by the silhouette of a figure coming alone along the western trail from the desert to

the ranch, running with extraordinary swiftness.

But at some distance off he stopped and stood perfectly still, gazing in the direction of the mesa.

"An Indian—and a stunning one!" Ralph exclaimed in surprise and excitement. Having only just arrived in Arizona, he had not yet learned to take the appearance of an Indian upon the scene as a matter of course.

And the figure below was a fine one—nearly six feet in height, with broad, slender shoulders, perfectly erect, the head thrown back, motionless as a man in bronze.

"Oh, that is our Indian, or Tante's or Bettina's," Sally replied teasingly. "However, I ought not to speak of him disrespectfully, for he is the son of an Indian chief and a chief himself, I believe, when he happens to be at home from college. Really, he does seem to be an unusual fellow."

"There are several of these Indian students at my college," Ralph remarked. "Queer contrast their existence must offer, if they return to their own people in the holidays."

Ralph was watching as he talked.

The man below had started to move again and was climbing the ascent to the mesa. It chanced that the trail was not far from the spot where the two Camp Fire girls and their companions were standing.

When the Indian reached the top he hesitated a moment, perhaps surprised by the unexpectedness of seeing two strange young men. But, without making any sign, he went on in the direction of the group of tents.

Not far from her own tent Mrs. Burton was sitting in a big camp chair, with Dawapa on the ground beside her. The Indian girl had been frightened by the appearance of so many strangers.

Standing in front of Mrs. Burton was a big, good-looking fellow named Howard Brent, the son of another Arizona ranchman, with whom she was talking.

The Indian stopped in front of them, but Polly did not notice until she heard a little suppressed cry from the girl beside her.

Mrs. Burton was not altogether pleased at the sight of the young man.

After all, he had too mysterious a fashion of appearing at camp unexpectedly.

But something in the dignity and aloofness of his manner always impressed her.

"I am sorry," he said. "I did not know you had friends with you or I would not have come. They must have told you to be prepared before now."

"Told me what?" Mrs. Burton demanded with her usual impatience.

"That a storm is coming."

The Indian pointed toward the southwest.

"Nonsense," the young ranchman beside Polly replied. And then in a patronizing fashion: "The Indians out here think they are great weather prophets, and that they know the signs in the sky as well as we know the face of a clock."

The young ranchman looked up at the sky and then sniffed the air.

"Not a sign of a storm that I can make out, and I was born and brought up in Arizona."

"Oh, well; even if a storm does break on us, I suppose we can find refuge in our tents," Mrs. Burton added, not specially

interested in the subject of the weather at the present moment, and thinking that Tewa might have manufactured a more worth-while excuse for his appearance.

In response the Indian said nothing, but the other man laughed.

"I don't believe you realize what an Arizona storm toward the end of July may mean, Mrs. Burton. However, there is no reason for worrying tonight."

Tewa turned away, not replying to Mrs. Burton's vague invitation to remain.

The next instant, however, Dawapa had jumped up and seized the young man by the arm.

"Take me home; I don't like it here. I have fear, Tewa," Dawapa whispered.

Her companion shook his head.

"It is too far; there will be no time before the storm gets here." Freeing himself, he walked quickly away.

Half an hour later the first informal Sunrise Camp Fire dance was over. The young men guests had started back on the trail toward the Gardener ranch.

In another half hour Mrs. Burton and the girls were in their tents asleep.

Tewa, the Indian, had disappeared.

Only Mr. Simpson had not retired. He had gone down to his own solitary tent after the young men visitors departed. But he did not seem able to sleep.

The moon had gone down, but the night was still fairly clear, with a few stars overhead.

However, over toward the southwest there was a yellowish white cloud rolling up the horizon. Suddenly, all the vitality and freshness had gone from the atmosphere.

But more important, down in the neighborhood of the creek there were queer rustlings in the branches of the tall cottonwood trees, as if the birds were whispering together. On the ground there was the faint sound of running, soft-padded feet.

Also Mr. Simpson heard familiar cries of the animals farther off—the queer barking of the coyotes, the snarl of a wild cat—signaling each other of the approach of danger.

Perhaps the tents ought to be more securely fastened down in case of danger.

Mr. Simpson was again climbing the

mesa when he saw away off, coming from the neighborhood of the Painted Desert toward them, what appeared like a giant. It was a huge column of sand borne straight upright.

A hurricane was behind it!

CHAPTER XVI

AFTER EFFECTS

ONE of the conspicuous characteristics of Mrs. Richard Burton was that she was at her best in emergencies. But, as she was a celebrated actress, it was of course easy to understand her appreciation of dramatic moments.

Before Mr. Simpson reached the top of the mesa she had awakened.

Something—a sound or an increasing heaviness in the atmosphere—had brought her slowly back to consciousness. Half a moment she lay wondering why she felt such a sense of impending calamity when, so far as she knew, everything about her was peaceful. Marie was breathing contentedly in her cot on the opposite side of the tent.

Getting up, Polly put on a heavy rose-colored silk dressing gown—the admiration of the Camp Fire girls—and walked to the opening of a tent.

The air was thick; the sense of calamity more convincing.

Going outdoors, Mrs. Burton looked up at the sky. The funnel-shaped, yellowish white cloud was coming closer, but not so close as the extraordinary pillar of sand. Then she saw Mr. Simpson and ran forward to meet him.

"Get the girls out of their tents quickly, or the tents will be down upon them."

There was a great bell fastened to a post near one of the tents for use in emergencies, but Mrs. Burton could not have reached it in time. However, before she got there it had begun ringing and the girls had run quickly out in response.

Some instinct must have taught them the proper thing to do, for, in an instant, they had dropped flat down on the ground. There was no place nearby to take refuge—no cavern in the rocks—only the flat surface of the mesa.

It is extraordinary how few people show nervousness or cowardice in the face of unexpected danger.

Now, of the little Camp Fire party, none of whom knew anything before of the perils

of an Arizona storm, and entirely unprotected as they were, only Gerry Williams and Marie were frightened.

When Gerry came out of her tent she was clad only in a thin little wrapper. As soon as she looked up at the sky and heard the muffled roar of the oncoming storm, which in a strange way seemed only to increase the stillness nearer by, quite senselessly she started running—running alone along the top of the mesa as if she meant to plunge over for safety.

Sally Ashton, who had followed nearest her, made no effort to stop her. Indeed, Sally flew straight to her sister Alice's arms and they quietly lay down beside each other, covering their faces with their hands. For it is an odd thing how many differences members of a family may have and yet, in a moment of peril, they are reunited, deserting many an affection which had seemed a stronger tie than blood.

But, fortunately for Gerry Williams, Vera had seen her loss of judgment. Vera it was who had aroused soon after Polly had left her tent and, guessing at once what was about to take place, had rung the bell.

For Vera had the gift for sudden, quick action without waiting for advice.

That instant she seized Gerry by the shoulders and, as she was much the stronger, threw her down in the sand, pinioning herself on top of her and holding her still. She was not a moment too soon, for almost at once the storm passed over them. And all this, of course, has taken longer in the telling than in the time of action.

The column of sand drew nearer, like a vast herald of disaster with the wind roaring behind it.

And in the face of the terrific sound, Marie began screaming.

It was so nonsensical and yet it set on edge the nerves of everybody who was close enough to hear her.

She was kneeling with her face buried in her hands, crying as loud as a frightened child, and occasionally murmuring a word or two of a Latin prayer, when she could gather sufficient self-control.

Mrs. Burton chanced not to be near enough to speak to her, but she did see Mr. Simpson go to Marie and sit down beside her. What he said must have had

a somewhat soothing effect, for she did not cry quite so noisily, or it may have been that the storm was at the instant passing over them.

Any one who has ever experienced a western storm will tell you of having gone through almost the same physical experience. First, there is a terrible sense of oppression, then, a sound of a tremendous roaring in the ears and of heavy pressure, followed by a queer tingling and burning of the skin.

However, as a matter of fact, the Sunrise Camp Fire party did not meet the real force of the storm. In the eccentric fashion that a hurricane often shows, it turned as it neared their mesa and swerved toward the south. But they had at least a portion of it and were bathed in fine sand like a down-pouring of rain.

Yet the whole incident was over in such a little while! And the entire party got up almost simultaneously, as if they had been Mohammedans praying in the desert—the early morning prayer of every true follower of the Prophet. For it is the Mohammedan custom at a given moment

at sunrise and at sunset to kneel and, burying the face in the hands, pray with the face turned toward Mecca. And, also, at a given moment, in Moslem countries the prayer is over with the ringing of a great muezzin bell.

Naturally, as Camp Fire guardian, Polly was most anxious to learn the effects of the past few moments upon the girls, whose welfare she took almost too seriously perhaps.

But as soon as she staggered up she heard a voice beside her saying quietly:

"Don't try to talk for a moment, Mrs. Burton, please. The air is still bad. It may hurt your throat."

And Polly saw that Ellen Deal had come directly to her. The next moment she had brought a camp chair and was gently forcing her into it.

Polly was pleased and touched. She had not devoted as much attention to Ellen as she had to some of her other guests. For one thing, Ellen was older and seemed to have one of the slightly natures it is hard to be intimate with at first. However, she believed that Ellen must have fine

qualities, else the severe Dr. Sylvia Wharton would never have been so anxious for her to be one of the party. And later, perhaps, she would have her chance.

"You are very good; there is nothing the matter with me," Mrs. Burton murmured, and then frowned and smiled apologetically at the same time. For her voice apparently seemed to have departed and she was absurdly weak. But, then, she must remember that she had originally come to Arizona because this very trouble made her acting impossible.

However, the Camp Fire girls really appeared more entertained than frightened by what they had undergone.

"I feel rather like a kitten that has been left out over night," Sally remarked. "My fur is all ruffled." She sat blinking her big soft brown eyes and shaking her brown hair, which was in a mass of brown fluff over her shoulders. If Sally had dreamed how much she did make people think of a kitten, perhaps she would not have said this. Yet she did know, since "kitten" had been her father's name for her ever since she was a tiny child.

At present Alice was entirely concerned with her younger sister.

"You are sure you are all right, dear? I was so worried about you. As the storm blew across us I was thankful to remember you had gained five pounds since we arrived at the Camp Fire," Alice said, speaking with such an appearance of solemnity that it was difficult to decide whether she was joking. But, then, as growing too fat was Sally's particular horror in life, she was of course teasing her in the usual elder sister fashion.

Sally pretended not to hear.

"Where is Gerry? Is she all right?" she demanded. "She was just in front of me before the storm broke. Here she comes, now."

In fact, Gerry was at the moment only a few steps away, leaning on Vera's arm and looking fragile and shaken.

"I am abominably afraid of storms; have been always," she exclaimed petulantly. "So I suppose you were right not to let me run. Perhaps I might have been knocked down. Still, I think you were frightfully rough, Vera. Perhaps you

can't help it, having been brought up in the country." And Gerry ended her speech with the fine scorn which one remembers the city mouse felt for the country mouse in the old fable.

"Yes, I am sorry if I hurt you," Vera returned, quietly disengaging her arm from the other girl's, now that she saw there was nothing the matter and knowing that she preferred being with Sally. She herself wished to learn how Peggy and Bettina and their Camp Fire guardian had passed through the storm.

It was now nearly daylight on the top of the mesa. The sun had not risen, but there was a kind of general grayness that preceded the approach of dawn. At least, it was possible for the girls to grope their way about and to recognize each other as they approached close by.

Vera now saw that Bettina had gone over toward Mrs. Burton and that Peggy, in her usual practical fashion, was wandering about trying to discover how much damage had been done. The Indian girl was with her.

It was a piece of good fortune, or per-

haps what is usually the cause of good fortune—a piece of good sense—that the camp fire had been put out before the girls had retired for the night. In these dry months in Arizona, when there is ordinarily so little rainfall and living so near the great ranch fields of corn and alfalfa, Mr. Gardener had suggested that it was wiser to take every precaution. Now the ashes had blown in every direction and the three sticks, which usually stood like a tripod above the camp fire, had tumbled abjectly down. More important, the kitchen tent had collapsed.

When Vera reached Peggy she discovered that she was pulling at the tent ropes and trying to find out the extent of the damage.

“Do try to dig out a saucepan or a kettle or anything you can find, please, Vera,” Peggy suggested. “I am going to start a fire and make some coffee, if one of us can find the stuff. Nothing happened of any consequence and yet my knees are as shaky as if I had been through the war. And I’m afraid Tante will be ill. Mother wrote me not to forget—even if she never spoke of the fact—that she really is out

here for her health. I don't know whether being a Camp Fire guardian can be much of a health cure, but at least it is stimulating." And Peggy laughed and set to working vigorously with Vera's aid to search out what was needed. In the meantime, Dawapa kept fairly close beside her. For, apparently, she was less shy with her and liked her best.

Bettina had knelt down beside Polly.

"I hope you are all right," she began, wishing that she did not always appear so cold and reserved before her mother's best beloved friend, and that she could show the extent of the admiration and affection she felt for her.

"You are very good, 'Little Princess,' to think of me," Polly said more lovingly than she usually spoke to any of the girls except Peggy and Gerry. "But I seem to be hoarse as a crow from the sand in my throat. Sit here beside me for a moment, won't you? After a little we must all go back to bed. Ellen has gone to hunt up a blanket or something for me. Are you cold?"

Bettina shook her head "No," but she

sat down close to Polly, wishing that she could take her hand, or do one of the pretty things with her that came so easily to Gerry Williams or any of the girls even without the claim that she had upon her mother's old friend.

A moment later she and Mrs. Burton were both laughing, in spite of the strangeness and discomfort of their situation.

Marie had found her mistress.

"We will go back to ceevelization today, nes pas. The West it is too terreoble. It will be ze death of madame."

Marie was shaking her hands and rolling her eyes. Even in the semi-darkness one could guess her expression from the tones of her voice. "But for Meester Simpson, I should have been killed."

"Oh, not so bad as that, Mam'selle," Mr. Simpson added, for he had followed to see that all was well. "I'll go now, Mrs. Burton, and see that the sleeping tents are steady, so that you may have a little rest tonight."

"And you'll find some wraps for the girls, please, Marie?" Polly added, knowing that

the wisest way to quiet Marie's excited nerves was to give her an occupation.

She then closed her eyes, it seemed to be for only two or three moments, but opened them in time to see the Indian, who had warned them earlier in the evening of the approach of the storm, coming toward her for the second time as she supposed. She had been foolish, perhaps, not to have heeded his information, but they could have done nothing, except perhaps to start out for the Gardener ranch. And more than possibly they would not have arrived in time. Then, as nothing had really happened of consequence, they must have had the long ride in vain. However, Mrs. Burton felt that she owed the Indian youth an apology for her careless disregard of his good intention.

She was opening her mouth to speak to him when she found that Tewa had apparently not even seen her.

He had dropped down on his knees before Bettina, and yet far enough away to be entirely respectful.

"You are not hurt; all is well with you, Anacoana? I have been waiting in a cave

not far away, where I wished that all of you might take refuge," he explained.

Bettina felt her cheeks crimson and a sensation more of surprise than anything else for the instant kept her silent.

She had told Tewa her Camp Fire name and he had used it several times. But that had not seemed remarkable. They were friends and she had found him unusually interesting. He had told her of the work he hoped to do for his people as a lawyer representing their claims before the great Government of the United States which so often had misunderstood the Indian. And Bettina, whose life had largely been spent in Washington among the lawmakers of the country, had found nothing ridiculous in this idea.

Tewa had even confessed the struggle he had always to make, not to return to the life and customs of his own people at each home-coming. And Bettina had urged him to follow his larger ideal.

Now, however, his use of her Camp Fire title—even his interest in her welfare—struck her as almost impertinent. Yet

she did the Indian the justice to realize he had not meant this.

"We are all perfectly safe; the storm was not in the least serious," Bettina replied coldly, although she could feel her voice suddenly shaking.

Although Mrs. Burton had not yet spoken, Bettina was aware that she had become deeply annoyed; that in some fashion she was entirely misunderstanding the situation. But how could she explain; what was there to say at the moment?

'Go to your tent, please, Bettina; I will speak to Tewa,' Polly said with a coldness of which she was always capable. The whole atmosphere had changed. Bettina felt humiliated and angry, but obedience was the only possible thing. Yet she had the sensation of not having been altogether fairly treated. Why was there no real sympathy and understanding between Mrs. Burton and her? She ought not to be made responsible for a situation she could not have avoided.

But Bettina did not see their Camp Fire guardian alone until late that coming afternoon.

On her dismissal she had found Peggy and Vera, and assisted them with the making and serving of the coffee. She had also scorched her cheeks, which were burning hot in any case, making a plate of toast. Then, after a frugal breakfast and just as the sun was rising over the new Sunrise Hill camp, the campers went back to bed.

And no one got up until about lunch time.

Polly did not come out of her tent all day.

However, just before dusk she sent for Bettina.

Sitting up in bed, Mrs. Richard Burton was looking rather more frail than the people who loved her would like to have seen. And Bettina was also worried by her appearance, although she did not know just what to say.

Of course, the fact of the matter was that Polly had been uncomfortable all day over what she thought was Bettina's too intimate friendship with the young Indian, in whom she herself was interested. She knew that she did not understand Bettina's disposition, and that she did not have her

confidence. She was also afraid of her own ability as a satisfactory Camp Fire guardian. All this, beside the experience of the night, had made her ill and undeniably cross.

“In future, as a favor, Bettina, I must ask you to have nothing more to do with Tewa. The young man comes here to camp as a teacher—not to be a cavalier to any one of you girls. You are to have nothing more to do with him.”

Polly Burton spoke in the domineering tone which she often used when she was cross. She had been doing this ever since her girlhood and always in the old days it had offended Betty Aston, who was now Betty Graham and Bettina's mother. It offended Bettina at the moment. No one had ever really ordered her to do this or that in her life—this was neither her mother nor her father's method.

Besides, it struck Bettina as unfair to her and to the young man who had befriended her.

Tewa had been invited to camp by their guardian and had been treated as a friend. He was educated and courteous, and Bet-

tina did not wish to appear unkind or ungrateful. Besides, by this time it struck her as absurd to have paid any attention to the young Indian's use of her Camp Fire name.

But Tante was looking at her and waiting for an answer. And evidently she had no idea that the answer could be of but one kind.

"Very well; I shall do what you wish, of course," Bettina replied, but speaking with a dignity and a hauteur which had partly helped to earn for her the once childish title of "Little Princess." "But really, Tante, I do not see why you are suddenly taking this attitude; nor what Tewa has done that we should not be friendly with him. I do not see why, because he is an Indian, we should be less courteous to him than he has been to us. I am sorry that he called me by my Camp Fire title tonight, but I can't see that it makes a great difference."

"I prefer not to discuss the subject, Bettina," Polly answered decisively. Nor did she show the least sign of relenting at Bettina's acquiescence.

CHAPTER XVII

MISTAKES

CERTAINLY, in the days that followed, Bettina kept her word.

Watching her, as she felt it her duty to do, her Camp Fire guardian could not see the slightest swerving from her promise.

Yet Se-kyal-ets-tewa continued to come now and then to camp, and Mrs. Burton continued to like him, as she had from their first meeting on the train.

After all, she was not so conventional a woman that she should have objected to a friendship between Bettina and the young man, simply because he was an Indian. He was well educated; even more than that, he was a student and would one day be a leader among his own people. And never, except for a single moment the night of the storm, had he apparently failed in entire respect to each member of the Camp Fire club. He was far more courteous, more

dignified and more helpful than an American fellow would have been under similar circumstances.

But it was true that Mrs. Burton considered Bettina more anxiously than she did the other girls, for several reasons. In the first place, there was always Betty—Bettina's mother—to be thought of, who was a far more conventional woman than her celebrated friend Polly Burton would ever learn to be. This had been true in their girlhood, and the different circumstances of their lives had emphasized it. For Betty Graham, as Senator Graham's wife, living in Washington, was compelled by the conditions of political life, as well as by her own nature and point of view, to conform to the conventions that every capital city requires. And Polly Burton and her husband, although famous members of their profession, naturally passed a wholly different existence. They knew all the actor people with whom they worked—rich and poor, successful and unsuccessful. It was impossible to Polly Burton, as it had been to Polly O'Neill, to like people for their possessions—or even for their attainments—

but only for some characteristic which appealed to her vivid and emotional temperament. So she was always making odd and not always desirable friendships and generously doing for people, some of whom were worth while and some who were not.

So, personally, she would like to have befriended Se-kyal-ets-tewa far more than she was at present doing. But the idea of Bettina's befriending him was not the same thing. For Mrs. Burton considered that Bettina's mother would have objected to any possibility of an intimacy between her daughter and any young man not in her own social position. Betty herself had been in love with Anthony Graham before he was a person of the least importance; but grown people have a way of forgetting the facts in their own lives. However, Polly may have been mistaken in her theory of Bettina's mother's point of view. In writing, she had never mentioned the young Indian, except in a casual fashion, and never that Bettina appeared more interested in him than any one of the other girls. Indeed, she had not thought this herself until Gerry's suggestion to her.

After all, was Gerry behind the present situation? Would Mrs. Burton have paid any attention to Tewa's simple speech or to his frank show of concern, except for Gerry's past innuendos? So slight a thing can arouse human suspicion in this unstable, all too human, world.

However, as a matter of justice, Mrs. Burton was not aware that Gerry's speech had any influence upon her.

And, unfortunately, Bettina's present coldness was not only bestowed upon Tewa but upon the Camp Fire guardian as well. She was angry and hurt over what appeared to her a nonsensical and arbitrary attitude.

But she said nothing to any one of what had taken place—not even to Peggy—and Mrs. Burton said nothing either.

If Bettina had known, however, there was some one else watching her—the last person whom she would ever have dreamed of. This was the Indian girl, Dawapa.

Dawapa was staying with the Camp Fire girls at their Arizona camp. Occasionally she went home to old Nampu's house, but only to return within a few hours. She was an odd creature—a skilful artist—

knowing how to make beautiful pottery; a weaver of wonderful baskets—a clever worker in brass and silver, but with little other sense. The new Sunrise Camp Fire girls had learned a great deal of hand craft from their Indian guest. However, she was unlike the ordinary Indian girl. Indeed, she had never had many companions among the members of her own race. They were gay and energetic, laughing and chattering among themselves, with jokes and quarrels and interests much like any other race of girls.

But something about Dawapa had kept her apart from them. She was morbidly shy and timid, and yet in a way she had a curious pride about herself, feeling that her fair skin and hair set her above other Indian maidens. Besides, her mother, Nampu, was rich, her pottery having gone all over the world to be placed in museums in far countries, revealing the possibilities in art of the American Indian.

So in her way Dawapa was vain, as many shy people are vain without being suspected of it by other people. And she had decided that she wished to be betrothed to the

young Indian chieftain, Se-kyal-ets-tewa. For it was thus Dawapa thought of him. His American ideas, his college education, did not interest her. She believed that, like all good Indians, he would return to his own people and take up the work of his father—a kiva chief, when his college days were past.

To an American girl this attitude of Dawapa's may seem a strange one, as she was only between sixteen and seventeen years old. But there was nothing extraordinary in it; the Indian girl marries young, and in the Hopi country it is the girl who proposes marriage. Also the children belong to their mother's clan.

Before the coming of the corn time Dawapa had begged old Nampu to make her wishes known to Se-kyal-ets-tewa's people. But Nampu, for all her stupid and squaw-like appearance, was wiser and more acquainted with the ways of the white world than one would have given her credit for.

She had known the Indian boy since his childhood and many an hour he had talked to her of his ambitions, his dreams, while

she worked swiftly and silently at her pottery. She knew that he had taken all the prizes at the government schools; that his teachers at the schools had insisted he be sent East to college. Old Nampu also knew that Se-kyal-ets-tewa's desires had become like those of the white youth. He would wish to have at least some part in choosing his own life companion.

Therefore the old Indian woman had put Dawapa off, telling her that she was too young; that the Indian youth must be allowed to finish his education. She had not told her that marriage between them was impossible, because Nampu herself wished that it might take place. The Indian gods would see to it, perhaps, by the mysterious methods which they alone understood. Besides, old Nampu, as we know, was also a medicine woman, and there are love potions which may be made from herbs as well as healing ones.

Then Dawapa came to visit the Sunrise Camp Fire girls and believed she saw that Tewa fancied the white girl, Bettina.

Dawapa did not have the average intelligence of the girls of her own race. Cer-

tainly she had no appreciation of simple friendliness.

But there was so little upon which to hang her suspicions that Dawapa would probably have let the idea slip from her mind, except that Gerry Williams, who guessed the situation, occasionally teased her concerning it.

It may be that Gerry simply was teasing, since there are persons who have a mischievous spirit without having a malicious one.

But, then, behind everything else that had happened, or was to come, was the fact that Gerry disliked Bettina.

Since their first meeting she had not liked what she called her coldness and pride. Then there was the more recent sting of their open quarrel. Moreover, to Gerry's nature it was tantalizing to know that Bettina had the very things she most desired, without appreciating them; even though with her prettiness and wit she expected some day to acquire all she wished.

As a matter of fact, however, Bettina was not conscious that Gerry actually disliked her; only that they were antagonistic.

For her share of their quarrel she had apologized on the following day, being too well bred and really too sweet-tempered not to feel remorse.

July's golden sun had faded and the blistering dog-days' sun of August arrived, and with it the time for the Sunrise Camp Fire girls and their guardian to make their pilgrimage to the nearby Indian villages to witness their August ceremonial dances. For then the Indian priests performed great magic that the gods might send down much rain on the corn crops.

Therefore, under the direction of Mr. Jefferson Simpson, the Camp Fire tents were transferred from the neighborhood of Cottonwood Creek to the valley near the base of the three mesas, where the five Hopi villages stand.

The Camp Fire party went a few days in advance of any of the important ceremonies, knowing a great number of tourists would come crowding in as the time of the flute and snake dances drew near.

It was the evening of the second day after their arrival at the new tenting place, and Mrs. Burton and her niece were tak-

ing a walk a little after their camp fire supper. The other girls were busy with the work, but Polly had asked that Peggy be spared to her.

They were strolling along hand in hand, like two girls, looking up toward the summit of a mesa several hundred feet in height. To the north and left was the largest of the Hopi villages—the town of Oraibi. Below in the valley were the corn-fields of the Indians, now tall and green, although with only small ears of corn showing on the waving stalks. Here, also, were their peach orchards and gardens.

But the woman and girl had come away from these and were walking along a road almost at the bottom of the mesa. It was difficult to see the village in detail from below, as the houses seemed to be colored like the living rock.

“Tewa says his town of Oraibi was on this very spot, in 1540, when Coronado discovered the province of Tusayan,” Peggy remarked. She was in a reflective mood, since neither she nor her aunt had been talking for the past five minutes, so intent were they both on the strangeness of their

surroundings. "Odd, isn't it, Tante, that the civilization out here is really older than one finds in many places in Europe, only we know so little of it. You'll take me to Europe some day, won't you?"

Polly nodded. "Take you any place in the world you wish to go, Peggy mine, if I am free and you think you love me enough to endure my society. Sometimes I am afraid, however, I am not a very successful Camp Fire guardian. What do you girls honestly think of me?"

Polly looked directly at her niece and her lips twitched, a little with amusement and a little with concern.

One knew that, to a straightforward question, Peggy Webster was unable to return anything but a truthful answer. She flushed slightly.

"They think you are awfully charming, dearest."

Polly laughed. "To be charming, Peggy, is hardly a valuable characteristic of a Camp Fire guardian, or even of a Camp Fire girl, since there are a number of things I can think of as more important. Go ahead; be honest, dear. I have been

thinking if our Camp Fire club is to go on for a time longer, as I wish it to do, I ought to know what we are accomplishing together."

"Oh, well, Tante, you are terribly inspiring; the girls all think that and say they never felt so happy or so alive as they have since they came out here with you, and they never have learned so many things. But——"

"But what, Peggy, please?" Polly asked more seriously than she had yet spoken.

"But," continued Peggy a little desperately, as if she felt herself pushed to the wall, "some of us don't—at least, I don't think you understand all of the girls equally well. Sometimes you seem to have favorites. Oh, I don't mean that you are not extremely kind to us all alike, and I don't want you to feel that any one is ungrateful."

"Has some one complained of me to you, Peggy?" Mrs. Burton asked quickly.

Peggy shook her head. "Goodness no, dear, and it isn't fair for you to be asking me questions if you are going to get wrong impressions from me. Mother always told me that you did not like being criticised."

“Ridiculous! Think of Mollie Webster daring to tell her daughter a thing like that when she has been criticising me all her life and I have never dared resent anything she has ever said. I suppose because the things were mostly true,” Mrs. Burton ended, with her cheeks as crimson as a girl’s. “But you are right, Peggy; perhaps we had best not talk personalities. I am sorry I am not ‘understandy.’ It is perhaps the most valuable trait a Camp Fire guardian can have. Anyhow, I’ll be glad when the next few days are over. I confess I feel nervous over looking after all of you girls through these strange Indian ceremonies. They sound terrifying to me—the weird costumes and noises—and I’ve positive nightmares over the snake dance.”

“Oh, you have too much imagination, Tante, and you take us too seriously. After all, we are not babies and you are not responsible if things do go a little wrong with us. I sometimes think I ought to look after you more,” Peggy answered seriously. “But you know we have a friend at court. Tewa’s father is a kiva chief in Oraibi and Tewa will be sure to try

to take care of us. He promised Bettina and me to show us over his father's house one day. May we go? I'd like to see a real Indian house."

Mrs. Burton shook her head. "We will be tired out with things Indian in the next week," she answered, evading the question. "But I am glad that Terry Benton and Ralph Marshall and perhaps some of their friends are to watch the ceremonies with us. I feel a good deal more comfortable, being in their society than in an Indian's on their festival days. I have no doubt Tewa's veneering of civilization will pass from him completely."

Peggy laughed and threw back her head so that her dark eyes, clear and frank as a sweet boy's, rested on the summit of the old cliffs above them.

"Oh, I don't believe the Indian is as bad as he is painted," she said jokingly. "Really, there are ideas and symbols in their religion which seem to me very beautiful when one understands them. And Tewa is a very fine fellow, I think, regardless of his nationality. But come on, let's go back, dear. How cool the nights do grow out

here, even after the hot August days. Don't those gray Indian houses, with the ladders leading to their second floors, look like ruins of romantic old stone battlements?"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE INDIAN VILLAGE

NOT only was the Sunrise Camp Fire guardian a little relieved by the companionship of Ralph Marshall and Terry Benton and their western friend, Howard Brent, the next day, but the girls as well.

The climb up a precipice of four hundred or more feet to reach the village of Oraibi required a good deal of effort, but, fortunately, the camping party had grown accustomed to climbing in the past two months. But once there, for the difference in appearance between Oraibi and a white man's city, one might have made a journey to the moon.

The houses were gray, like the native stone, and built on terraces with outside ladders ascending to their second floors. They were made of slabs of stone set in mud, and had many tiny windows.

Today the narrow streets were thronging

with Indian men and women dressed in extraordinary festal clothes.

The Camp Fire party had arisen at daylight and yet they had missed the singing and the race from the plain below in the early morning performance of the great Snake Ceremony. At present, young men and old kept appearing out of kivas, which are the underground chambers where the Indian secret religious ceremonies are performed. And their faces were so strangely painted, their heads decorated with such brightly colored feathers, and their bodies so strung with beads, gay blankets and strips of long fur, that they might have come from some region far deeper under the ground.

The group of Camp Fire girls remained as close together as possible.

For, beside the Indians, there were many tourists in the streets—Mexican cowboys, western ranchmen, travelers from the East and visiting Indians from other tribes.

Whenever it was possible, Bettina kept her arm linked in Peggy's, for Peggy was such a sensible person she seldom suffered from imaginative fears. However, Peggy's

attention was absorbed, whenever the young man could manage it, by Howard Brent. He seemed to like Peggy's straightforwardness and her fearless, original comments on everything that interested her.

Ralph Marshall and Terry Benton devoted themselves to Sally Ashton and Gerry Williams, except when they deserted the girls to talk to Mrs. Burton. And this they seemed to do as often as it was possible.

Although Ralph Marshall had been to camp two or three times since the evening of the dance, Bettina had never talked to him again alone. She was polite, of course, because of her mother's wishes, but it was idle to attempt a friendship with any human being with whom one felt so uncongenial. His somewhat flippant comments on the Indian preparations they were witnessing annoyed Bettina.

Nevertheless she wondered how she could have ever believed that she would be attracted by the life and customs of the Indians. If they were a peaceful semi-civilized tribe, their appearance belied it. Bettina did not understand that the Snake

Festival, which they expected to witness that day, was the strangest and most incomprehensible of all the religious ceremonies of the western Indians.

The morning songs had been sung; the race of the young Indian warriors, from the plain to the mesa to obtain the consecrated objects to place in their fields of corn, had taken place.

There would be nothing further of importance until toward noon.

Therefore, the Sunrise Camp Fire party was wandering about, not knowing exactly what to do next.

They were standing in front of an Indian house which looked a little handsomer than the others, when the door opened and a young man came out.

He was really splendid in appearance, for he was not costumed in the fantastic fashion of the other braves. He wore a shirt of a wonderful shade of blue—the dye once made by the Hopi Indians—but now almost unknown, leather trousers, an embroidered belt, and moccasins bound about his legs with strips of leather. In his belt there was a beautiful hand-made

javelin or dagger with a hilt of unpolished jewels, turquoise and topaz and sapphires. His face and body were unpainted, but about his head was a circle of gray and white feathers fastened to a band on which was set in jewels a design meant to represent the rising sun. And the young man's figure was nearly perfect and his skin of light bronze.

He would have moved on, merely bowing gravely to his friends, for they of course immediately recognized him, except that Mrs. Burton impetuously spoke. She was really filled with admiration and also with amazement. Could it be possible that a man with the education and apparently the intellect the young Indian had, could take part in a ceremony which one knew to be as revolting to civilized ideas as the Snake dance?

"Tewa, is it true you are one of the Snake Priests?" Mrs. Burton demanded unexpectedly.

The young man turned and came up to her.

Ralph Marshall, who was standing beside Mrs. Burton at the moment, gave a low exclamation.

"Mase, it can't be you," he said in astonishment, making no effort to conceal his bewilderment. "Why, at college I should never have thought you would ever dress or behave like your own people again. You were a grind except when it came to being on top in athletics."

It was the Indian who explained the situation.

"Mr. Marshall and I were classmates at college." Then, without appearing to notice the others in the group, all of whom were listening to his reply: "I see no reason, Marshall, why you should be astounded. I am an Indian; being educated as a white man has neither changed my race nor blood. Many of the customs that seemed good to my father still seem good to me. We shall never understand each other. When the Indian wants rain to save himself and his people from hunger he prays to the gods who have power over the clouds to send down rain on the earth. In your white man's religion, though you say if you have faith the size of a mustard seed you can remove mountains, yet you make no prayers to the forces of nature. No,

Mrs. Burton, I am not a Snake Priest," Se-kyal-ets-tewa answered, "or my costume would be unlike this, as you will see later. But I am one of the runners at dawn and at dusk when the ceremony is over." He stopped, hesitating a moment and looking from Mrs. Burton to Bettina, to whom he had not yet spoken.

"You said at one time that you would like to see inside an Indian house. This is my home. Would you and your friends care to look through it?"

No one could have spoken more simply or more courteously, and Mrs. Burton was unfeignedly glad to accept. Indeed, she was first to follow the young man indoors, the rest of the party close behind her, and Bettina still holding to Peggy's arm.

They came into a big living room, the floor covered with sand, but clean and straight. Jars and vases of handsome pottery were about the room and the walls hung with bright blankets.

In the room was Dawapa and an elderly Indian squaw whom Tewa explained was his father's wife. Only here did he show any feelings of embarrassment or shame.

He was careful to let them know that the squaw was not his own mother.

But the interesting room was the corn room, or the Indian storehouse. Here the corn was sorted according to color—blue and red and yellow—and laid on the stone floor. In one corner of the room were three hollow stones and a big stone to be held in the hands and used for grinding corn.

As Peggy was interested in this and the room was not large, she walked over toward the place, leaving Bettina for the moment alone. However, standing near were Mrs. Burton and Ralph Marshall Gerry Williams and Vera.

But Bettina was not talking to any one of them and was a few feet away.

At once the Indian youth turned and walked up to her.

“Have I offended you, Miss Graham?” he asked. “I thought you were my friend and the thought gave me pleasure. But of late you do not speak to me. You do not care to listen to the legends and songs of my people, which you once said you enjoyed. If you are weary I do not wish

to trouble you, but if I have given you cause for anger I desire to ask pardon."

There was nothing in what the Indian said to make one embarrassed or unhappy; his manner was perfectly respectful and courteous, yet Bettina found herself blushing hotly. She realized that the others, even if they were not listening, could not fail to hear. And she wondered what her Camp Fire guardian would think of the situation.

But Bettina was not a coward, nor was she ever wilfully unkind. Indeed, she had an unusual gentleness and sweetness and did not like to wound.

"No, you have not offended me and I am still interested in what you used to tell me," she answered with quiet friendliness, "only it is not possible that I should listen to you any more."

Whatever the young man's feelings at Bettina's reply, he gave no sign, and she moved across the room and stood pretending to look at a crude drawing in bright colors which was painted on the wall.

Her back was turned to the rest of the party.

As the room was a small one, Peggy and a few of the others had already gone out of doors.

Except the Camp Fire guardian, really no one paid much attention to the conversation between Bettina and their Indian host save Gerry Williams. Ralph Marshall looked at them a little curiously, but was too well bred to overhear what was being said.

But Gerry saw that Mrs. Burton was pleased, both with Bettina's speech and manner and suffered an uncomfortable pang of jealousy. She had no idea of being able to rival Peggy Webster in her aunt's affections, but she did not intend that any one else should supplant her as the next favorite.

Gerry really felt a great admiration and affection, a girl's hero worship—which is more frequent than most people realize—for the great actress who had made so much of her life with no help save her own ability. But, more than this, Gerry felt that it would be extremely useful to her if she could have Mrs. Burton's friendship and, more than that, her assistance. For Gerry had her own way to make and did

not see how she could make it in the way she wished unaided.

More than this, she disliked Bettina, and a sudden spirit of mischief possessed her.

As soon as Bettina walked away, Tewa joined Mrs. Burton and together they left the room, the others following. But Gerry, seeing that Bettina had not turned, remained behind till the last.

Then, just as soon as she saw that Bettina had become aware the others were leaving her, Gerry slipped out, quickly fastening the big wooden door behind her. It fastened with a crude wooden latch.

It did not occur to Gerry that Bettina would not soon follow them. Some one in the Indian house would be sure to open the door as soon as she called out.

Once in the narrow street where the crowds were now gathering in greater number, Gerry really repented her foolish, indeed her malicious, childishness. She thought of returning herself to open the door, but she had been careful to hide from Bettina's gaze and, even if Bettina saw what she had done, Gerry was of

course prepared to insist she had not dreamed the room was not empty.

In the street Tewa said good-by to the Sunrise Camp Fire party at once, and they started immediately toward the great Snake Kiva.

A special effort had been made that Mrs. Burton and her party have entrance to this underground chamber where the first part of the famous festival was to take place.

It was then nearly noon and it was with difficulty that each person made the way along. Except that Ralph tried to be of service to Mrs. Burton in engineering her, and Sally clung to Terry Benton's arm, the others struggled alone, too intent on the surroundings to think of anything else.

Moreover, the procession of Snake Priests were passing on their way to the kiva.

Each priest wore on his head a brilliant head-dress of gay feathers and about his knee a tortoise shell rattle. And all of them were painted in an alarming fashion and had their necks strung with silver and jeweled beads.

They went first into the underground

chamber which was on the outskirts of the village, the persons who were to be allowed to enter following behind them. For, this rite of the Snake Ceremony the Indian guards carefully.

The Camp Fire party was standing crowded to one side and as near the entrance as possible.

The scene made one's nerves on edge with a curious combination of fear, repulsion and curiosity.

A large bowl in which holy water was placed was brought into the kiva and the floor then sprinkled with sand for about ten feet. Around the sand the Snake Priests seated themselves on flat stones, one priest costumed as a War God.

All this the Camp Fire party watched with absorbing interest and no particular horror.

But, now, three or four of the priests arose and, going over to a corner of the kiva, picked up great jars in which the rattlesnakes had been kept for several days.

Quite calmly and coolly each priest thrust his hand into the jar and, pulling out the snakes as if they had been long coils of

ribbon, thrust them into a canvas bag which he carried.

As they started back toward the other priests, instinctively Peggy Webster made her way toward Mrs. Burton and slipped her hand into hers. In spite of the heat of the day and the stuffiness inside the great chamber, her aunt's hand was cold as ice.

"I feel horribly ill, Peggy, dear; I don't know why I ever thought of bringing you girls to a festival like this, no matter how celebrated.

Peggy looked quickly about at their group and for the first time missed Bettina. But, being wise, Peggy said nothing.

The girls did not seem to be so unpleasantly affected as Mrs. Burton; but, then, none of them had quite her sensitiveness and quick response to emotions and conditions, except, perhaps, Bettina, who was not present.

"I think you had better go out, Tante," Peggy whispered.

Polly set her teeth with her old obstinacy. "No, dear, remember I am the Camp Fire guardian; I can't leave you girls alone to a scene like this."

The solemn moment had arrived; a low chanting song begun.

A priest stuck his hand into the bag, drawing out as many snakes as possible. These he flung into the great basin of holy water. Other priests followed suit. Then, when the snakes had been washed, they drew them out, flinging them onto the floor of sand where the great mass wriggled and curved and twisted, kept in place by other priests with snake whips.

In spite of her effort, in spite of her self-condemnation, Mrs. Burton felt the scene getting farther and farther away and a kind of darkness steal over her.

Then she heard Peggy's voice saying quietly, "You must walk, Tante; we are all going to get out of this."

A few moments later, in the fresh air again, Polly was even more annoyed with her own weakness and failure as a Camp Fire guardian. But, of one thing was she determined; no more of this particular Indian festival did she wish her Camp Fire girls to see. Beautiful and symbolic as many of their customs, the Snake Festival,



THE GREAT MASS WRIGGLED AND CURVED

whatever its mystic origin, was not one for women to witness.

Yet Mrs. Burton feared the girls would oppose the return to camp.

The actual Snake dance did not take place till sundown.

Fortunately no one objected to going down to camp for food and rest, except Alice Ashton. Alice seemed perfectly calm and self-possessed. As she was making a study of Indian customs, she was aggrieved at being taken away in the midst of the most interesting part of the ceremony. However, she was too well brought up to do more than mildly object.

Then, as they made their way toward the nearest trail leading down the precipitous mesa, almost at the same instant several of the Camp Fire group missed Bettina.

CHAPTER XIX

READJUSTMENTS

“IT is incredible, Bettina’s talent for disappearing,” Mrs. Burton said to Peggy in a low voice, torn between anxiety and anger.

But this time it was Peggy who appeared the more uneasy and required cheering.

“I don’t think Bettina is responsible for her accident exactly, Tante,” she returned. “And something unexpected must have happened this time. I hate the thought of the ‘Little Princess,’ as I used to call her, being alone in a mixed crowd like this. No one appreciates how shy she is and she really isn’t much good at looking after herself; Aunt Betty has always been so careful with her.”

“Well, we won’t trouble about that now,” Mrs. Burton remarked more reassuringly, appreciating Peggy’s greater nervousness. “The thing is to look for her; she can’t be far away and doubtless we shall

find her in a few moments. Bettina must have waited behind when we came out of the kiva. I was so uncomfortable or I should have noticed before that she did not follow us."

"Bettina was not in the kiva with us; I found that out while we were there; but it was not worth while to speak of it until we had come out and you were better."

Polly's lips twitched a little with a smile not unmixed with criticism of herself.

"Peggy, dear, I really think you ought to be Camp Fire guardian instead of me; you have so much more sense," she whispered, turning to go back.

"I hate being called sensible," Peggy returned ungratefully. "I know it makes me less attractive than other girls." And this really is the unreasonable attitude of a good many persons who have otherwise a tremendous lot of sense, not realizing perhaps that good judgment is about the most valuable human attribute.

Ten minutes afterward Peggy and Mrs. Burton, who were in advance of the others, saw Bettina walking toward them with the

Indian whom they had said good-by to perhaps three-quarters of an hour before.

The streets were now less crowded, so it was not difficult to see them. They were walking in silence, but Bettina's face was pale and her lips held close together, perhaps to keep them from trembling.

Peggy glanced quickly from Bettina's face to her aunt's. And her own heart sank.

She knew that her beloved Tante was not a particularly reasonable person at any time and that Bettina had fallen from grace, not once but several times since their camping expedition. She also knew that Bettina was extremely proud and reserved, and that she would not condescend to explanations and asking forgiveness.

Peggy felt that she had rather a task before her with them both.

"I am sorry, I can't explain now why I was delayed," Bettina exclaimed as she came up to them. "I only wish you had not waited for me."

Then she turned to her companion.

"Thank you, good-by," was all she said to him.

But she did not appear penitent or even particularly chagrined at any inconvenience she may have caused the rest of the party.

Then she joined Ellen and Alice and walked down to their temporary camp below the mesa with them.

Peggy kept beside her aunt whenever the descent made it possible, but she did not talk to her a great deal, nor did she again mention Bettina.

However, Peggy realized the difficulty was not over.

Her aunt's face was whiter than Bettina's and her blue eyes held a coldness which was rare to them, since they were Irish eyes, usually warm and radiant and with a compelling power, which was a mark of her genius.

It was self-evident that she believed Bettina's act to have been sheer bravado—a deliberate intention to remain and talk alone with the young Indian, in defiance of her own expressed wish.

After a late luncheon the Camp Fire group separated, each one of them going to some chosen spot to rest, the young men returning to the village.

Polly went to her own tent worn out and depressed, knowing that she was not able to talk to Bettina for the present. And, more than this, that she must make up her mind what was best to be done in the future.

Peggy found Bettina, not in her tent but sitting some distance away with a book but making no effort to read.

Peggy sat down beside her and put her arm across her shoulder.

This was a peculiar boyish fashion which Peggy had of expressing affection.

"It is all right, Bettina; I don't blame you a bit," she remarked loyally, "only under the circumstances I do think you ought to explain to Tante just what happened. I have not spoken of it to either of you, but I have seen she did not like your being friends with Tewa. Still, I think it is partly because of what your mother would think."

"There is nothing I can very well explain," Bettina returned. "It is merely a matter of my word, and I am not even sure myself of what happened. But, of course, I will tell; I have really nothing to

hide. Then you see, Peggy, dear, I am not accustomed to having my word doubted."

Bettina held her chin high with a fleeting look which suggested her mother, though she was not usually like her. And, though Peggy swallowed a sigh, seeing Bettina had no desire even to confide in her at present, she asked no further questions, except to add:

"You'll go to Tante, won't you? After all, she is our Camp Fire guardian and must feel responsible for us. I don't think we will get much from our experience together unless we accept some leadership."

And, though Bettina made no reply, Peggy's last words did make an impression.

"I think I'll wait until she sends for me," she added finally.

So the girls waited for about two hours and, by and by, Marie came to say that Madame Burton would like to speak to Miss Bettina and that they would find her at the edge of the peach orchard, on the other side of their encampment.

Explaining that she knew the place because she and her aunt had walked there

together the evening before, Peggy went with her friend.

But their Camp Fire guardian did not look very formidable, nor very impressive when the girls finally discovered her. Until one came close up to her she looked slender and young; indeed, like a girl herself. Marie had brought over a chair and she was sitting under a big peach tree, with the fruit hanging rose color and the leaves green above her head and her hands clasped together in her lap.

Yet, when they were near enough, Peggy, who understood her aunt better, saw a strained look of regret and suffering about her face, but also a look of determination, which the friends of Polly O'Neill's and of Polly Burton's understood very well. Possibly, if she had not been an obstinate person, she would never have succeeded as she had in her work.

"I am sorry to have you come so far to me, Bettina," she began, "but I preferred having our talk away from the other girls. I did not expect you, Peggy, but after all it is as well you are here. Bettina may tell you what she does not think it worth while

to confide in me and that is why—with, so far as I can see, no real end to gain—she defies my wish.”

The beginning was unfortunate. The woman and the two girls realized it at once and perhaps they were all sorry.

But Bettina's face flushed and her lips closed firmly together. Nether girl sat down and Bettina held her hands clasped tight together before her. She looked very pretty and of such delicate high breeding that, watching her, Mrs. Burton felt a sensation of self-distrust.

But Bettina was also determined to be obstinate and ungrateful.

“If you believe I made any effort to deceive you, it is not worth while my telling you differently, is there?” Bettina said in a low voice. “I don't know how it occurred; I was stupid, I know, but, as I started out of the Indian house this morning just as I got to the door, it closed and fastened on the outside. I tried to push it open but could not manage it.”

Mrs. Burton was sitting straight upright with her eyes fastened on Bettina's.

“But, my dear child, that sounds ridic-

ulous, you know. The door could not have latched itself; it was too crude and clumsy an affair. Besides, why did you not call out? We could not have gotten far away." Always she had been too impatient with the people who did not think and act quickly, Polly Burton should have remembered. Also, she might have remembered the spirit in which she was apt to receive criticism when she was young. But this is another something which older persons forget.

"I did call," Bettina replied. "But I think I was too surprised at first. Then I thought some one would surely come back and open it for me."

"And Tewa did come?" Mrs. Burton asked.

The question was a distrustful and an unkind one, and there was a painful silence afterwards.

"Tewa did come, but not for some time afterwards. The house must have been empty until then, else I thought the Indian woman or Dawapa would have heard. But I did not mean them. I thought whoever closed the door—" Bettina answered,

however, with no perceptible change in her voice.

"But who did close the door?"

Polly was sorry for her last question. Even if she did suspect Bettina of disobedience to her, and of a very obstinate determination to have her own way, she did not appreciate just how unlovely her own view of Bettina's deception was, until she had given it expression.

"I am not sure," Bettina replied. "Besides, I would rather not talk on the subject any more. Feeling as you do about me—and for what reason I don't understand—I think I would rather go home as soon as you can arrange it for me."

Bettina had spoken, but all three of them knew it was the idea which had been in their Camp Fire guardian's mind.

Sorry she was, of course, and perhaps bitterly disappointed, but the act appeared inevitable. There could not be misunderstanding and mutual antagonism between a Camp Fire guardian and one of her own group of girls, and particularly away from home and in the Camp Fire guardian's charge.

"I am sorrier than I can say, Bettina," Mrs. Burton added, more gently than she had yet spoken. "But I am afraid we don't understand each other and, as you are not willing to trust my judgment rather than your own, why perhaps it is best. Only your mother will be grieved and angry and disappointed with both of us."

And Polly Burton's voice was suddenly full of tears. The thought of Bettina being Betty's daughter and causing the first real trouble that had ever come between them in so many devoted years, filled her with sorrow and bitterness. After all, she had hoped to give Bettina a great deal of pleasure; this was the only possible reason for bringing her or any of the Camp Fire girls west, and had she asked a great deal in return?

And although Bettina heard her Camp Fire guardian's reply in silence, she too felt as if she were in the midst of a wretched dream from which there seemed to be no way of awaking. The whole difficulty was such a matter of misunderstanding, so "much ado about nothing." And her mother and father would be both disap-

pointed and offended with her. They both loved and admired Mrs. Burton more than almost anyone in the world. It would not be easy for them to understand why their daughter should make so manifest a failure with her.

Clearly Bettina also realized that she was also forfeiting her position as a Camp Fire girl. Every effort might be made to conceal the reason for her being sent home, but the truth would inevitably become known, or, if not the truth, something more trying.

However, Bettina did not speak; it would not have been possible at the moment. She was saved from it by Peggy.

Peggy, who never had cried since she was a baby—about whom it was a joke in her family that she had not the usual feminine fountain of woe—now had her eyes full of tears and her lips shook.

“If Bettina has to go back home, I am going with her,” she replied firmly, although her voice was lower than usual.

Mrs. Burton looked at her in astonishment.

“You, Peggy! Then you mean that you

prefer to take Bettina's view of the question, rather than mine; that you think she has a right to do as she likes, without respect to my judgment!"

Really, Polly's tone expressed only surprise for the instant, as she was too amazed over Peggy's lack of loyalty for any other emotion.

Peggy shook her head. "No, dear; it isn't that, and you know I care for you more than anybody in the world, almost; but I don't think you are being fair to Bettina. If she goes home alone, not only her own family but mine and all our friends who find out, will think she has done something dreadful. And she has not done anything dreadful so far as I can see. No one will ever know how I hate giving up our camping together, yet I feel I must go."

"Very well, Peggy," Mrs. Burton answered in a voice she had never used to the girl before. "Suppose we go back now to camp."

CHAPTER XX

UNDERSTANDING

JUST at the door of Mrs. Burton's tent Bettina stopped a moment.

"May I come in for a little, please, Tante; I have not told you everything," she said under her breath, her face, which had been pale until this moment, flooding crimson.

But it was the first time for several weeks that Bettina had used the title by which she had always called Mrs. Burton when she was a little girl.

"Certainly," Polly answered quietly, opening the flap of her curtain and entering, the two girls following, for Peggy seemed determined to have a part in each interview.

Her tent had been a parting gift from her husband and was an unusually comfortable one, which held a divan, a low table and a chair, beside the sleeping cots. There were Indian blankets on the floor for rugs.

"Polly sat down on the chair, motioning to the girls to be seated on the divan.

"I am tired," she apologized.

And Peggy saw with a pang of remorse and regret that her aunt looked ill as well as unhappy over what she had been through with Bettina and herself. And Peggy also wondered whether she would ever be forgiven, realizing what a difference it would make in all her future life should she lose her affection. Sitting down now beside her aunt she did not dare speak to her nor touch her.

Bettina, however, would not sit down. Suddenly she looked like a contrite child, instead of the somewhat arrogant and superior character she had been pretending to be for the past few hours.

Reaching into her pocket she drew forth a small wooden statuette, carved and brilliantly colored.

"Tewa gave me this; I thought maybe you ought to have it," Bettina said penitently. "It seems absurd to me and yet I did not like to refuse and hurt his feelings by not accepting. I think it is a kind of an idol which is supposed to bring good

fortune. Anyhow, Tewa won it at an Indian race this morning, and he gave it me when he returned to the house and found me there."

And, like a child giving away a new doll, Bettina handed the little image to her Camp Fire guardian.

Bettina and Mrs. Burton both looked so absurd that, partly from nervousness and more from amusement, Peggy giggled irresistibly.

For an instant Polly and Bettina attempted to pay no attention to her; then Mrs. Burton's blue eyes lightened and she bit her lips. Bettina only remained grave.

Then, unexpectedly, because she always had done unexpected things and always would, Polly Burton, having changed but little from Polly O'Neill, reached out and impulsively took Bettina's hand.

"My dear, I wonder if we have both been absurd and I have been unfair?" she questioned. "It is only because I have cared so much——"

Bettina sat down on the rug and, unlike her usual reserved self, put her head down on Mrs. Burton's knees, covering her face.

"Please don't make me go home; I don't want to," she whispered, "but in any case Peggy shan't go with me."

Then, before any one else could speak, Vera, without asking permission, walked inside the tent.

"I am so sorry to interrupt," she began, "but Gerry Williams asked me to come and explain something to you. She says she closed the door on you, Bettina, in the Indian house this morning, partly for a joke and perhaps because, in a way she hoped to make Mrs. Burton angry with you."

Vera spoke in an entirely matter-of-fact fashion, as if there were nothing unusual in her statement. But the others stared at her in surprise.

"I thought it was Gerry, but I was not sure enough to say so," Bettina murmured, "and I am afraid I don't understand now."

"But why should she?" Mrs. Burton questioned.

Peggy, as usual, came directly to the point.

"It wasn't so extraordinary; Gerry is built that way. I guessed her measure

from the beginning. But the thing that puzzles me, Vera, is not Gerry's mischievousness, but how you induced her to confess."

"Oh, I saw that something troubled her and I simply went to her and asked what it was. I had been just ahead of her when we left the Indian room and I suspected. But I did not speak of that. I usually can persuade people to tell me the things that worry them."

Mrs. Burton took Bettina's hand.

"I am glad we were friends before this happened, but I am afraid matters are still wrong as I now have the problem of Gerry. I did not dream of the difficulties a Camp Fire guardian might have; certainly not of so unsuccessful a one as I am. Gerry will have to go back, and I had hoped we might do something for her."

Polly stopped and hesitated.

"Please, not on my account," Bettina urged gently. "After all, it was only a silly thing that Gerry did—not worth much attention."

"And after all you have always said, Gerry has not had the chance the rest of us

have had," Peggy interposed, which was good of her, since she had not liked Gerry from the beginning, and liked her even less well now.

Mrs. Richard Burton gave an expressive shrug of her slender shoulders.

"I expect I am more at fault than any one else; but life is a matter of the future—not of the past—isn't it? And yet I am sure we have all learned many worthwhile things from our few months of camp-fire life together. So, suppose we let Gerry have another chance. In the meantime we may be missing a wonderful sight. Let us walk toward Oraibi together."

Taking Bettina's arm in her's, Mrs. Burton left her tent, Vera and Peggy just behind. Then, after calling the other girls, they went again toward the road near the mesa crowned with the village of Oraibi.

In the plain above they could faintly see the Snake Priests moving around in a large circle—then more and more quickly. It was not possible to appreciate exactly what they were doing, for, although the Camp Fire party had found a slight eleva-

tion to stand upon, the mesa remained many feet above.

It was just as well, however, that they could not see more distinctly.

They did discover that, when the priests left the circle of dancers, they ran to the four quarters of the mesa and cast their offerings over their sides.

And then the Camp Fire party returned again to their camp, since the crowds of tourists were coming quickly down and darkness was falling.

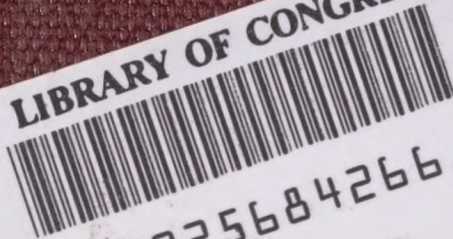
Neither did they think again of the young Indian, who went away that night many miles across the plain to plant a feather prayer plume at a shrine of white shells in the desert. Not until morning did Dawn Light return to the village of his fathers.

The next volume of the Camp Fire series will be called "The Camp Fire Girls at the End of the Trail" and will continue to tell of the adventures and romances of the girls in the far West. New characters will be introduced and new and interesting developments in the lives of the present heroines.





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